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"O THE DEPTH OF LOVE DIVINE:"
THE HISTORICAL RESOURCES OF METHODIST WORSHIP IN LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY RENEWAL

by

Jennifer Lynn Woodruff

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Theological Studies--Research

Asbury Theological Seminary

August 1997

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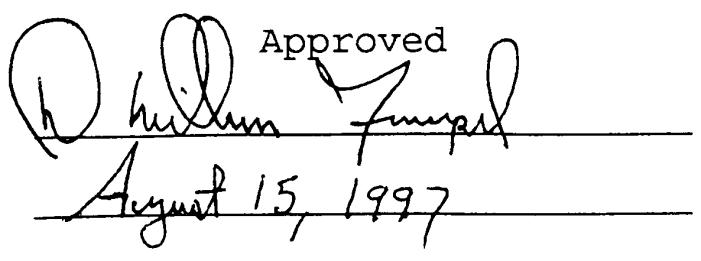

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O the depth of love divine,
the unfathomable grace!
Who shall say how bread and wine
God into us conveys.
How the bread his flesh imparts,
how the wine transmits his blood,
Fills his faithful people's hearts
with all the life of God.

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Sure and real is the grace,
the manner be unknown;
Only meet us in thy ways
and perfect us in one.
Let us taste the heavenly powers,
Lord, we ask for nothing more.
Thine to bless, 'tis only ours
to wonder and adore.
(Charles Wesley)

Liturgy is intended to be like a really good dance...
with many participants and a beginning and movement
and dignity and art and grace and beauty and a
conclusion.
(Christopher Platt)

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to express gratitude to all the family and friends who have supported me on the sacramental seminary journey: especially my parents, John Woodruff and Marilyn Stanger Woodruff; my advisor, Jerry Walls, and my thesis advisor, Bill Faupel; Donald Boyd and Jerry Mercer; the "crew" (Michele, Troy, Bill, and Kristen); Dorothy James, Janet Dean, Carolyn Moore, Russ Veldman, and Christ John Otto (my best teacher of things liturgical).

This thesis is dedicated with deep affection to William Kostlevy and Reginald Johnson, who have taught and challenged me, with grace and gentleness, how to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF METHODIST WORSHIP

Introduction to the Problem

As the twentieth century draws to a close, no one doubts that the United Methodist Church is in a time of transition, and this is no more evident than in the arena of worship and sacramental celebration. "Tradition" encounters "contemporary" at every turn, and they are seen as two opposing and often mutually exclusive factors. Yet, on the other hand, some of what is "contemporary" is really much older than "tradition." Yet again, though, so much of both "contemporary" and "tradition" is really no more than cultural accommodations. The only difference is that culture has changed over the years of Methodism's[1] somewhat disunited denominational existence. How is this confusion to be sorted out?

Methodists are not without substantive answers to this question within their own heritage; and before they decide too quickly and superficially about the ways to reform current worship practices, they would do well to consult some of the historical evidence and psychological dynamics of their tradition. It is the contention of this author that Methodism

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[1]For the sake of simplicity, "Methodism" is to be understood throughout as encompassing the appropriate name for the denomination in the period under discussion (i.e. Methodist Episcopal, United Methodist, etc.)

can develop a theological perspective, within the context of a consistent ecclesiology, regarding the purpose of worship and the sacraments. Such a purpose should be informed by a careful historical study, which should include a renewed though not uncritical interest in Wesley's own sacramental theology and ecclesiology.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to analyze the historical and psychological reasons for the American Methodist movement's departure from its spiritual and sacramental heritage in Wesley's Anglican tradition, and to trace the more recent attempts at returning to that heritage, in order to determine if and in what fashion that heritage should be recovered to address our contemporary culture.

Review of Related Literature

When considering the evolution of American Methodist worship and sacramental attitudes in the last two hundred years, there are no shortage of opinions and information. The challenge becomes sorting through the various points of view in order to discover the historical and psychological truth beneath them. However, a broad consensus and a number of major authors in the field can be noted.

The problem under investigation divides into four basic components:

(1) determining what in fact the spiritual and sacramental heritage is which Methodism derives from Anglicanism through John Wesley;

(2) analyzing the historical and psychological reasons for its departure from this tradition in the American setting;

(3) outlining recent attempts at returning to this heritage;

and (4) determining how Methodism can continue to recover this heritage to address modern culture. As Michael J. Taylor asserts in The Protestant Liturgical Renewal: A Catholic Viewpoint:

> Many Methodists are again becoming aware of their heritage and are convinced that liturgical and sacramental worship is not something that Methodism must introduce, but rather something that Methodism once possessed and to which it must now return.[2]

The first thing necessary in discussing Methodism's Anglican heritage is to gain an understanding of what exactly that heritage is. Here there are no shortage of resources. One of the most basic sources for understanding Anglicanism both before and after the Wesleyan revival is C.J. Stranks' Anglican Devotion, which gives a good basic description of Anglican spirituality as a Church and Prayer-Book centered, sacramental and eucharistic approach to the Christian life. Wesley's own appreciation of and appropriation of this tradition is shown in his Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America, a revision of the Book of Common Prayer for the American church, which he

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[2] Michael J. Taylor, The Protestant Liturgical Renewal: A Catholic Viewpoint (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 179.

introduced with these words: "I believe there is no LITURGY in the World, either in ancient or modern language, with breathes more of a solid, scriptural, rational Piety, than the COMMON PRAYER of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND."[3]

Secondary studies of Wesley's sacramental theology in his historical and ecclesiastical context abound as well. Among the first and most important of these is J. Ernest Rattenbury's The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley, originally published in 1948 and recently reprinted (1990). Although not without weaknesses, this work sets Wesley clearly in the Anglican tradition of sacramental and spiritual understanding. It was soon followed by John Bowmer's The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (1951) and other works by Bowmer on Wesley, the Eucharist, and early Methodism's practical observance of the sacraments. Because of his focus on British Methodism, Bowmer's work is less valuable for this study, but contains some insights.

Next to Rattenbury, one of the most seminal works on this topic is Ole Borgen's John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Definitive Study of John Wesley's Theology of Worship (1972). While the word "worship" in the title is a bit misleading, Borgen makes here an in-depth study of Wesley's own writings in order to determine his sacramental theology as thoroughly but not unexaminedly Anglican, stating at last,

The distinction between 'evangelicalism' and

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[3]John Wesley, Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America (London, 1784; reprint with introduction by James F. White, Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House 1984), 2.

> 'sacramentalism' must never be applied to Wesley. For him these two aspects were one, and later Methodism has paid dearly for tearing apart what God has united.[4]

Continuing along these lines, the view of Wesley as synthesizing "Anglican holiness of intent and Puritan inward assurance" in "the practical outworking of an accountable discipleship"[5] is put forth clearly and succinctly in an essay by David Lowes Watson on "Methodist Spirituality" in Frank Senn's Protestant Spiritual Traditions (1986). Another basic study of these issues, different in focus but similar in its conclusion, is Henry Knight III's The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace (1992). Finally, mention must be made of the work of James F. White. His writings on worship in general and Methodism at worship in particular span the 1970's-present and address nearly all of the components of this problem. Probably his most significant resource on this particular issue is his Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition (1989). This resource connects Wesley's Anglicanism strongly with the early church: "Wesley is not so much an innovator as a restorer. He is a good Anglican in his love of tradition, but it is a tradition that can liberate, that can reform the present."[6]

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[4]Ole Borgen, John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Definitive Study of John Wesley's Theology of Worship (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Pub. House, 1972), 282.

[5]David Lowes Watson, "Methodist Spirituality," in Protestant Spiritual Traditions, ed. Frank C. Senn (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 217.

[6]James F. White, Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 152.

Given the case for seeing Wesley and his warm heart within the context of eighteenth-century Anglican tradition, how, then, did American Methodism depart from what Wesley might have envisioned it becoming? Here, too, there is no shortage of opinions, although there is less consensus. In terms of primary sources, one needs look no further than Jesse Lee's Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America (1810). In Lee's description of Methodism as an onward march of preachers, class meetings, and endless conferences, is found his often-quoted disapproval of Wesley's Sunday Service:

> Being fully satisfied that they [early American Methodists] could pray better, and with more devotion while their eyes were shut, than they could with their eyes open....after a few years the prayer book was laid aside, and has never been used since in public worship.[7]

The other, more "liturgical" side of the coin is represented by T.O. Summers, editor of two nineteenth-century Methodist hymnals, who published a Commentary on the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (1873) a treatise on baptism (1854), and a collection of written prayers (presumably prayed with the eyes open!). L. E. Phillips summarizes Summers' position on this question, stating that Summers felt nineteenth century Methodists were more likely to err on the side of freedom than form, and saw his work as a counter to that.[8]

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[7]Jesse Lee, A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America (Baltimore: Magill and Cline, 1810), 102-103.

[8]L. Edward Phillips, "Thomas Osmond Summers: Methodist Liturgist of the Nineteenth Century," Methodist History 27, no. 4 (July 1989): 246.

From the perspective of the early twentieth century, William Warren Sweet, in line with the famous "frontier" thesis advanced by Frederick Turner, attributes the reason for Methodism's divergence from its heritage almost entirely to the influence of the Western frontier which Methodism encountered in its outreach, and the great tradition of revivalism and camp meetings.[9] This is certainly one of the factors at work. On the other hand, Paul Sanders, in his valuable doctoral dissertation, "An Appraisal of John Wesley's Sacramentalism in the Evolution of Early American Methodism" (1954), argues that the frontier experience and revivals confirmed Methodism in a pattern of worship and sacramentalism which it already possessed, pointing also to such leaders as Whatcoat and Summers who were not entirely swept away by frontier influences. Although later authors have demonstrated that revivalism was not confined to the frontier, where Sanders mainly places it, his work is otherwise helpful.

In 1970, Fred Hood wrote an important article in Methodist History titled "Community and the Rhetoric of Freedom: Early American Methodist Worship" which deals at a complex level with the tension between freedom and form in Methodism and the importance of freedom to the early Methodists. Hood outlines how Methodism's quarterly meeting was the precursor in style, rather

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[9]William Warren Sweet, Revivalism in America: Its Origin, Growth, and Decline (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), and Methodism in American History, revised ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954).

than the result, of the frontier camp meeting. He also asserts that the infrequency of the Eucharist was due to the controversy over Wesley's ordaining elders who could administer it, as well as the way it came to be viewed as a duty rather than a celebration. All of these influences, he maintains, further removed Methodist worship from a Eucharistic context. Also in 1970, Earl K. Brown's "Historical Perspectives on Methodist Worship" in Religion in Life covers a great deal of the same ground, giving special attention to the difference in context between America and Wesley's England. More recently, William Wade's dissertation "A History of Public Worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South, from 1784 to 1905," follows Sanders in attributing less determining influence to the camp-meeting tradition than is often assumed. Wade's valuable work draws heavily in his analysis of forms and orders of worship on the earlier insights of Nolan Harmon, a bishop and historian of Methodism, especially Harmon's The Rites and Ritual of Episcopal Methodism (1926).

With this background in place, it is now possible to outline contemporary efforts to restore the Wesleyan, Anglican, and ultimately early-church heritage outlined above. Resistance to this trend will also be noted and an assessment of the possible success of these efforts in reaching contemporary culture will be made. The literature dealing with these two final points will be combined, as one of these issues is seldom addressed without the other. In so doing, it is appropriate to discuss both authors and

certain movements. Among those figures are: Albert Outler; Joseph Quillian; the Order of St. Luke; and James White. In 1960, Quillian, dean of the Perkins School of Theology, wrote an article entitled "Methodist Worship in the Light of Article XIII" in the Perkins School of Theology Journal. He spoke of the need for Methodism to return to the Wesleyan and Anglican centrality of worship, sacrament, and relevant preaching.[10] Outler's "Worship and Christian Unity," a brief 1967 article, also set an agenda for the recovery of Methodist worship from what he saw as its "three sins": "absorbing our liturgies of the Sacraments into our liturgies of the Word;" confusion about the nature and function of the ordained ministry; and "grounding culture in aesthetic taste and ecclesiastical theater."[11] The Companion to the Book of Worship which appeared in 1970, edited by Quillian and to which Outler and White contributed, began to address some of these issues.[12]

More recently, the Protestant liturgical revival, which had already been gathering steam, exploded. One of the most valuable source in tracking both the progress and the meaning of this revival is the work of White. In a series of articles and books

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[10]Joseph D. Quillian, "Methodist Worship in the Light of Article XIII," Perkins School of Theology Journal 13, no. 2 (Winter 1960): 18.

[11]Albert C. Outler, "Worship and Christian Unity," Music Ministry, Nov. 1967, 5.

[12]This evolution of official Methodist ritual is studied at length in a valuable dissertation by Robert B. Peiffer, "How Contemporary Liturgies Evolve: The Revision of Untied Methodist Liturgical Texts (1968-1988)" (Ph.D. diss., Notre Dame, 1992).

from the early 1970's to the present he considers the value of the new interest in worship among Protestants.[13] His work has special value for Methodism because of Wesley's interest in and influence by the early church, and also because it contains many practical prescriptions for implementation. New Forms of Worship (1971), Christian Worship in Transition (1976), several crucial articles in the Christian Century and the Circuit Rider,[14] and Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition (1989) are among the most important of his writings on these issues. An Introduction to Christian Worship, originally written in 1980 and revised in 1989, while it does not concern Methodism's development specifically, is an interesting example of what a textbook on worship from a Protestant perspective, following White's prescriptions for renewed emphasis on community and Sacraments, would look like. White's work is not without problems, but it is carefully researched, generally thoughtful, and is fairly widely accepted as an authority.

No study of contemporary recovery of Wesley and his heritage would be complete without discussing the Order of St. Luke (hereafter O.S.L.), founded in 1946 as the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship in the former Methodist Church. The Order describes itself as "A Religious Order in the United Methodist Church

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[13]He puts the beginning of this revival at about 1966 in his New Forms of Worship (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 15.

[14]"A Liturgical Strategy: Four Lines of Attack," The Christian Century, 7 March 1979, 242-246; "A Protestant Worship Manifesto," The Christian Century, 27 January 1982, 82-86; "Does Our Liturgy Reflect Our Faith?", Circuit Rider, March 1982, 3-5.

Dedicated to Sacramental and Liturgical Scholarship, Education, and Practice."[15] In many ways it is a "church within the church" society much as Methodism was to Anglicanism. O.S.L. publishes a periodical, Sacramental Life, and an annual scholarly journal, Doxology, both of which offer theological explorations of worship and Methodist history, as well as practical ideas for local churches, and report on the success and failure of those ideas. O.S.L. takes the traditional Methodist concern for evangelization through the printed word seriously. Such works as Rattenbury's Eucharistic Hymns, White's edition of Wesley's Sunday Service, and a number of resources for public worship have all been either published or republished by O.S.L. Publications. As a religious order, O.S.L. asks members to abide by a Rule of Life and Service, with uniquely Wesleyan characteristics: "We affirm the apostolic hope....We live for the church of Jesus Christ....We magnify the sacraments...We seek the sacramental life....We promote the corporate worship of the church....We accept the call to service."[16] Analysis of the developments in Methodist worship from an objective historical perspective is not the strong point of this material, but it is a good primary source for what is happening on the "front lines" of the back-to-Wesley/liturgy movement.

Finally, mention must be made of two works which are popular

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[15]Order of St. Luke: Origin, Mission, Vision (Akron, OH: O.S.L. Publications), 4-7.

[16]Ibid.

in their orientation, but are nevertheless excellent attempts at making the Wesleyan material both accessible and relevant to the contemporary situation: Steve Harper's Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition (1983) and Rob Staples' Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality (1991). Staples' book can be faulted in its historical analysis, which is why it did not appear as a resource for explaining Methodism's departure from its heritage, but in terms of understanding the issues of that heritage theologically and connecting it to practical worship practices, it deserves more notice than it has yet received. Harper's book (which is more widely known) makes the same sort of connections for the life of private devotion which Staples does for public worship and sacramental practice.

This survey, though brief, gives an indication of the richness of this field for research. In many ways it is difficult to separate the works discussed into rigid categories. For example, works which focus mainly on Wesley's own theology and context, such as Borgen's, are not without awareness of the contemporary situation. Writers such as White, who are more interested in the contemporary scene, often display their own historical analysis and awareness of where the contemporary scene came from. While the events which led to American Methodism's sacramental and spiritual development are semi-firmly established, there is less consensus as to the relative weight of each of these events and the psychological reasons behind them.

These divergent opinions lead to different approaches to the contemporary situation as well. The early-church-focused approach of White (more so in his later writings) is insistent on always seeing Methodism in the context of the Church universal. A quite high Anglican attitude is characteristic of much of the O.S.L. Outler seeks to set the contemporary movement within a classical Wesleyan context. However, some broad areas of consensus do stand out. Most of them center on renewing Methodism sacramentally through more frequent Eucharist and more fully understood and consistent approaches to Baptism; renewing it spiritually though a return to the accountability and discipleship that was characteristic of Wesley as well as the early church; and renewing it ecclesiologically though a better sense of its existence as the Body of Christ and as a member of the Church universal.

Theoretical Framework

Several delimitations and assumptions must be stated at the outset before this study is undertaken, and several definitions clarified.

Delimitations

First of all, time and space limit this discussion to United Methodism and its predecessor denominations only. Many other denominations draw on Wesley as their spiritual ancestor and attempt to preserve some versions of a Wesleyan viewpoint in their theology and ministry. Many of these churches are found

within the holiness tradition. Although different and fascinating questions would arise from studying this material, considering them individually, and discussing the sacramental and spiritual journey of the Wesleyan/holiness movement as a whole beyond its influence on Methodism, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the literature contending that the Methodist revival under its original leadership was both sacramental and evangelical is correct. Exactly in what ways and to what degree this was true, and how Wesley saw Sacraments theologically as formative to the Christian life, will be the focus of the early parts of this work.

A second assumption based on secondary literature is that not only Methodism but Protestantism is in the throes of a paradigm shift; rediscovering and (in some cases) renewing its approach to worship and the sacraments. The specific implications, value, and effect of this "revival" are up for debate, but its existence and the necessity of dealing with it are not in question. It might be said as a corollary that Methodism, with its famous knowledge/vital piety dichotomy, seems to display these tensions more acutely than most denominations. Specific reasons for this will be investigated below.

Definitions

A word needs to be said about the precise definition of the words "sacrament," "sacramental theology," "worship," and

"liturgy."

"Sacraments:" though Wesley as an Anglican partook of the larger Catholic tradition which saw seven Sacraments marking and shaping Christian experience, the main focus of this thesis will be on Baptism and the Eucharist. Methodists follow most Protestants in considering these to be the two essential sacraments. "Sacramental theology" is the discipline that attempts to elucidate and explore such questions as what a Sacrament is, the presuppositions of a worldview which makes Sacraments possible, how Sacraments are related to each other, how they are related to other theological dogmas and constructs, and their function in the Christian life.

"Worship" and "liturgy" are related, but not equivalent terms. "Worship" encompasses everything which a church congregation does when it gathers as a body to focus on God, whatever time of the week or time of day this may occur, and whatever order of service this may involve. "Worship" may or may not involve sacramental celebration. "Liturgy" is a specific term for the structure of an order of service. It is not limited to what have been traditionally (and sometimes derogatorily) known as the "liturgical" or "high-church" traditions (Catholic, Anglican/Episcopal, Lutheran, etc.), but is instead a neutral technical term. Camp meetings had their own liturgy.

Methodology

The method used in this study will be an intertwining of

historical, psychological, and theological approaches. The early part of the thesis, which examines Wesley's roots and Methodism's journey after (and away from) him, will have a basically historical focus. In this section, the study attempts to discover two things. First, what historical events occurred in Methodist history related to worship and the sacraments. Secondly, what the implications were of these events for the development of Methodism. A historical focus will also be evident in attempting to describe and evaluate the current Protestant renewal in worship, sacramental celebration, and liturgy.

The final segment of the study will step back and look at the data from a more theological perspective. Having combed the Methodist heritage for resources, and evaluated the state of the contemporary situation and its relationship to other historical situations in which Methodism has found itself, a proposed program for applying those resources to the contemporary situation must ultimately build on theological grounds. Otherwise, it will find itself captive to cultural influences. However, historical considerations must continue to inform the final conclusions in an attempt to guard against cultural irrelevance.

Finally, both the historical and theological foci of this thesis will be complemented by attention to and awareness of the dynamics of human psychology. Psychology does not create theology. But it often determines people's reactions to theology

in ways they do not fully understand. In so doing, it affects the course of history. Wherever this dynamic seems particularly applicable, special attention will be paid to it.

Organization

This study will be organized into four major parts, corresponding to the sub-problems above. I) The first chapter will deal with a) Wesley's Anglican heritage in terms of sacramental theology, worship, and liturgy and b) the state of his wishes for Methodism in relation to that heritage. II) The next chapter will a) outline the development of American Methodism after Wesley's death, from its early establishment in the Eastern United States through its spread westward to its nineteenth-century journey as an established denomination and b) trace the tensions between freedom and form therein. III) The third chapter will outline the contemporary state of affairs: a) showing the birth and growth of Protestant liturgical and sacramental renewal; b) tracing the attempts at and resistance to recovering a "Wesleyan" view, and c) outlining the current tensions and developments on this issue in Methodism. IV) Finally, a brief proposal will be offered which draws theologically on the uncovered historical evidence to present a program of renewal which addresses the problems of contemporary culture.

Justification for Study

Why, after the copious research on this topic by gifted and perceptive theologians, historians, and liturgists, another study of Methodists at worship? Several good reasons emerge. First, while much research has been done regarding all four of the sub-problems on which this study concentrates, few current works have attempted a complete synthesis of all these ideas. Second, the time is now ripe for a systematic exploration of what strengths the Methodist heritage has to offer to an increasingly pagan, post-Christian culture the full power of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Finally, a justification for any study of Methodists at worship at all is that it is in the daily and weekly worship of God where the Body of Christ most fully learns its theology, knows itself, grows in relationship to all its members, develops a sense of its mission to the world, and--above all--meets the Living God. Shouldn't the church offer Him its best?

CHAPTER 2

THE HERITAGE OF METHODIST WORSHIP

Introduction

John Wesley was born and died an Anglican, and in fact died an Anglican priest. However, he also died as an evangelical preacher. From these two facts, a host of controversy has sprung up, and a great deal of that controversy surrounds his supposed approval (or lack of same) of particular modes of worship and sacramental theology.

In an attempt to discover the resources of his thought on these issues, as well as his wishes for the American Methodist church's development along these lines, four issues must be considered in turn: his background, his sacramental thought (especially concerning the Eucharist), the role of worship in the early Methodist movement, and finally the origin and intention of his Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America.

Wesley's Theological and Cultural Background

Anglican Churchman

Wesley had a deep, although not uncritical, love for the Church of England. Paul Sanders provides a detailed and fairly accurate analysis of Wesley's attitude towards the church and the heritage he inherited from it. Sanders insists that, despite the obvious impact of Wesley's Aldersgate experience on his personal life and theology,

> He remained a High Churchman all his life, combining in his theology, worship, life and work what seemed to be the best of both Catholic and Evangelical thought. His mature position was not uncritical, but it remained at heart the Catholicism of classic Anglicanism, interpenetrated by a warm Evangelicalism which undoubtedly gave his churchmanship a new direction, but was far from either destroying it or existing in opposition to it.[1]

This churchmanship, according to Sanders, was that of any educated and devoted Anglican of the day, consisting of conservatism with regard to the state and respect for the continuity of Church theology and worship with tradition. This theology was expressed, and the church unified, through a "stately" liturgy and assemblies of worship where the word was preached and the Sacraments offered as "a real means of grace," and the ordained ministry was ordered and stabilized by the episcopal system.[2]

In his classic Anglican Devotion, C. J. Stranks discusses at length the Anglican approach to the spiritual journey. It is not hard to see how some of these emphases, especially the theme of holiness, flavored early Methodism, at least in Wesley's ideal conception. Among the characteristics of the "Anglican way" are: a balance between Catholic and Protestant; a balance between reason and emotion; a strong grounding in the Bible which keeps the church "from ever losing hold of the need for entire

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[1]Paul S. Sanders, "An Appraisal of John Wesley's Sacramentalism in the Evolution of Early American Methodism" (Th. D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1954), 44.

[2]Ibid, 84-85.

consecration in heart and mind and act;"[3] a resulting emphasis on serious Bible study; a central focus on the Prayer Book as the main agent of both corporate and personal formation; a theological and experiential awareness of the "nearness and naturalness of God;"[4] practice of the spiritual disciplines; a keen sense of the stewardship of time; and an understanding of the Church and its Sacraments as the place where grace is to be found. Stranks notes, "It is within the framework of the Church's life that growth in holiness takes place."[5] Paul Marshall develops these ideas further in an essay on Anglican spirituality in Protestant Spiritual Traditions, reminding readers that, historically, it is the corporate and liturgical rather than the personal and doctrinal which have taken precedence in Anglican thought and practice. "It is neither denominational doctrine nor ecstatic experience that binds Anglicans together," he comments. "Rather, there is a commitment to being the Church, and striving to do what the Church is called to do in the world."[6] Sanders concurs with this as he assesses how Wesley saw the individual spiritual journey as taking place against the background of the corporate journey and institution:

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[3]C. J. Stranks, Anglican Devotion (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), 273.

[4]Ibid., 279.

[5]Ibid., 283.

[6]Paul V. Marshall, "Anglican Spirituality," in Protestant Spiritual Traditions, ed. Frank C. Senn (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 125.

"Wesley's churchmanship remained more or less that of any devoted, earnest Christian who knew that if God is his Father, it is the Church who is his Mother."[7]

Wesley thus inherited from his surroundings, despite the corruption and half-heartedness of many of his colleagues, an earnest concern for the process and development of a holy life formed within the community of the Church, strengthened by Word and Sacrament. In fact, the Methodist renewal movement could be seen as an attempt to help the Church recapture these very characteristics by addressing an imbalance in this ideal. James White points out, that in the ethical Enlightenment Anglicanism of his day, Wesley's sacramental fervor and relationship to "enthusiasm" made him "a countercultural movement in the midst of an era of rational religion;"[8] a movement attempting to swing the church back to a part of its heritage which it had long ignored.

Primitive Churchman

Wesley also counted in his background and family many Non-jurors. The Non-jurors were a reform movement which originally came into being in an effort to, as Jane Tews says, "purge the Church of abuse in doctrine and liturgy by reaching back to the primitive church."[9] From this influence Wesley inherited not

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[7]Sanders, "An Appraisal of John Wesley's Sacramentalism," 86.

[8]White, Protestant Worship, 152.

[9]Jane Allison Tews, "The Origin and Outcome of the Liturgies of John Wesley" (D. Min diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1978), 4.

only their generally laudatory attitude towards the early church, but also many specific liturgical practices as well. Some of these tended towards the "high-church," such as the necessity for a prayer of oblation and an epiclesis in the Eucharistic liturgy.[10] During his time of study at Oxford, Wesley became interested in the liturgy and devotion of the church fathers, and read from both Eastern and Western sources. The Eastern/Byzantine writings especially influenced his conception of the nature of holiness.[11] Many of his odder liturgical experimentation in Georgia derived from his interest in the early church. Though he laid some specific rituals and practices aside as he matured, he retained a strong respect for the tradition, practices, and devotion of the early church throughout his life.[12] The practical outgrowth of this bore fruit in such services as the love feast and watch night. James White, in assessing Wesley's dependance on the early church, as well as his thoroughgoing pragmatism, concludes, "Wesley was a patristics scholar, and no one has ever shown better how relevant the early church can be to practice."[13]

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[10]Robert Milton Winter, "American Churches and the Holy Communion: A Comparative Study in Sacramental Theology, Practice, and Piety in the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and German Reformed Traditions, 1607-1825" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1988), 547-548. See also John Parris, John Wesley's Doctrine of the Sacraments (London: Epworth Press, 1963), 86-89.

[11]Tews, 6.

[12]Ibid., 12.

[13]White, Protestant Worship, 152.

Puritan Churchman

Wesley's Puritan and Moravian influence must be seen against his Anglican background.[14] However, it cannot be denied that it is from the Moravians that he was led into his own experience of assurance and inward piety. His continuing respect for the Puritan divines is seen in the large number of Puritan authors he included in his A Christian Library.[15] In his article on "Methodist Spirituality" in Anglican Spiritual Traditions, David Lowes Watson analyzes the importance of the "inward witness" and experimental religion to Wesley's journey. While not negating Wesley's background and the impact of the mystical, Anglican, and early church quest for holiness, the "power of the inward assurance" added a needed dimension to Wesley's experience and message without destroying its focus. Watson continues, "His acceptance of the divine initiative as the dynamic of his spirituality did not negate the importance of spiritual disciplines as its form."[16]

Methodist Synthesis

All of these rich heritages combined in a uniquely Wesleyan approach to theology in general and liturgical theology in particular. Karen Westerfield Tucker synthesizes much of the above evidence as she considers the theological criteria

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[14]However, Sanders denigrates their influence a bit too much in his analysis; see Sanders, "The Puritans and John Wesley," 15.

[15]Watson, 222.

[16]Ibid.

operative in Wesley's revision of the Book of Common Prayer to create the Sunday Service:

> Clearly these criteria embrace the basic influences upon Wesley throughout his life: classic Anglicanism with its emphasis on the authority and interrelationship of Scripture, reason, and tradition; the Non-Jurors' stress on Scripture, the early Church, and the "pristine" Church of England....the centrality of Scripture, evangelical piety, and freedom in the expression of worship emphasized by the Moravians and the Puritans; and the normativity of Scripture and reason embraced by Latitudinarian movements.[17]

In her analysis, these influences and the theological criteria of Scripture, antiquity, the Church of England, reason, and experience played themselves out in practice in Wesley's concern for worship "in spirit and truth" (vs. the "form of godliness"), decency and simplicity, and freedom of expression.[18]

Wesley's Sacramental Thought

In a characteristically succinct phrase, Sanders has remarked that "it was precisely Wesley's lifelong Eucharistic devotion which marks him out as typically Anglican, typically a churchman, typically Catholic."[19] Whether Wesley's Eucharistic devotion actually indicates all three of those things has sometimes been a matter of controversy, but what is undoubted is the fact of that lifelong devotion. For him, the Lord's Supper

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[17]Karen Westerfield Tucker, "Form and Freedom: John Wesley's Legacy for Methodist Worship," in The Sunday Service of the Methodists: Twentieth-Century Worship in Worldwide Methodism, ed. Karen Westerfield Tucker (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 19.

[18]Ibid., 25-29.

[19]Paul S. Sanders, "The Puritans and John Wesley," Work/Worship 17, no. 2 (April-June, 1967): 14.

was a crucial and central part of the Christian life, when that life was seen as a progress in holiness.

The emphasis on the Eucharist in this work is not to imply that Wesley did not find Holy Baptism of importance. He did consider and write on it, though not as systematically nor always as consistently. There are a number of reasons for this--some theological (possible ambivalence about baptismal regeneration) and some cultural (the prevalence of infant Baptism in an Anglican country, meaning that most of Wesley's converts would have already been baptized).[20] Nevertheless, to leave it out of the picture completely would do him injustice. And, although Wesley did not directly draw the connection, his understanding of Baptism and of the Eucharist were related at the heart.

The Meaning of a Sacrament

Wesley's definition of the Sacraments, as Ole Borgen points out, was simply that of his own church's Catechism, though it has been so often quoted as Wesley's that that source is sometimes forgotten. In his Sermon XVI, "The Means of Grace," he states that he owes his phraseology to "our own Church, which directs us to bless God both for the means of grace and the hope of glory, and teaches us that a sacrament is 'an outward sign of inward grace,' and a means whereby we receive the same.'"[21] Borgen

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[20]Sanders, 87.

[21]John Wesley, Standard Sermons, ed. N. Burwash. (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishing Co.; printed Shoals, IN: Old Paths Tract Society, 1988), 152. The original reference is to the Church of England Catechism, which can be found in a modern form in the American Book of Common Prayer (n.p.: Seabury Press, 1979), 857.

analyzes at length the meaning of the outward sign, the thing signified (the means of grace), and their relationship in Wesley's thought, maintaining that they are intimately related but not mutually inclusive: "they are not identical; no confusion of the two is allowed....both are necessary to make a Sacrament. One half of the definition does not suffice."[22] He concludes that

> the actual transmission and reception of God's grace is for Wesley the superior proof of ultimate and actual validity of any means of grace. Formal validity is necessary and of value for proper church order. But formal validity must not be confused with efficacy; the former is related to the work of men;[23] the latter wholly to God's gracious work of salvation.[24]

This does not downplay the real presence and the real grace contained in the Sacraments, but it does not confine the work of grace solely to the operations of the Church.

The Meaning of Baptism

Wesley's views of Baptism, perhaps more than any other part of his theology, betray the so-called tension between his Anglican heritage and evangelical activity. Gayle Carlton Felton

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For the text Wesley would have known, see Parker, The First Prayer-Book of Edward VI compared with the Successive Revisions of the Book of Common Prayer, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Parker and CO., 1883): "...an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

[22]Borgen, 57.

[23]While this author supports the use of inclusive language, citations from earlier works will be reproduced as they first appeared, for simplicity's sake.

[24]Borgen, 80-81.

comments,

> The pivotal dispute among commentators on this subject is over the question of Wesley's view of baptismal regeneration and, specifically, how his Aldersgate experience may have altered his understanding. This dispute is, of course, a subset of the larger debate considering the modifications in Wesley's theology after 1738, or the relationship between his high churchmanship and his evangelicalism.[25]

Henry Knight adds that the question here is not only whether Wesley maintained, modified, or abandoned the idea of baptismal regeneration but also whether or not for Wesley the content of infant and adult Baptism is the same.[26] Both issues have implications for his ideas about grace.

Wesley's Treatise on Baptism, an abridgement of an earlier baptismal manual written by his father Samuel, cites five benefits of this Sacrament.[27] The first is "the washing away of original sin by the application of the merits of Christ's death."[28] The second is its function as "the initiatory sacrament which enters us into covenant with God."[29] The third benefit is admission into the church, which is significant as the

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[25]Gayle Carlton Felton, This Gift of Water: The Theology and Practice of Baptism Among Methodists in America (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 14. Her entire chapter on Wesley's theology of Baptism (26-48) sets out all these issues in greater detail.

[26]Henry H. Knight III, The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace (Metuchen, NJ and London: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 178.

[27]John Wesley, "A Treatise on Baptism" in The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., ed. John Emory (New York: Lane and Scott, 1850), VI.12-22. See Carlton Felton, 26-31.

[28]Wesley, "Treatise," 14.

[29]Ibid., 14.

place where the means of grace are available and new members are nurtured in the life of holiness.[30] The fourth benefit is membership in the Kingdom of God, and the last (and most controversial) baptismal regeneration.[31] Additional benefits discussed in Wesley's writings include the death of the old nature and rising to new life with Christ; the beginning of the process of sanctification; and on occasion physical healing.[32]

Both Carlton Felton and Sanders point out that Wesley did subscribe to the idea of baptismal regeneration as it was taught by the Anglican church, but that he recognized "that not all who had been baptized in infancy were in fact regenerate Christians."[33] Neither, however, is willing to solve the problem by claiming that Wesley rejected the doctrine totally after his Aldersgate experience. Sanders comments that the confusion is compounded by the fact that the term "regeneration" was used by Wesley and the church in two different ways.

> Baptismal regeneration may be usually interpreted to mean that through the objective grace of the sacrament a new relationship is established....Wesley usually meant by regeneration a consciously-experienced inner conversion resulting in a changed life. The two are not antithetical; they may be complementary, but they must be distinguished.[34]

Because of his insistence on the need for adult regeneration,

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[30]Ibid., 15. See Carlton Felton, 28-29.

[31]Wesley, "Treatise," 15.

[32]Carlton Felton, 30-31.

[33]Sanders, 116; see Carlton Felton, 36.

[34]Sanders, 117.

Wesley was unwilling to admit that there was an "automatic, inseparable" relationship in infancy between the inward (regeneration) and outward (washing) aspect of the Sacrament. He

> insisted vehemently that baptism, even understood as inward grace, was only the beginning of a spiritual process and impotent in itself to effect salvation for one who survived infancy...The objective gift of grace in baptism must be fulfilled in a subjective change of will.[35]

Moreover, he felt that the onset of the age of reason usually (though not inevitably) caused most children to lose any objective regeneration which had happened in their Baptism. This, he felt, had certainly been his own experience. Carlton Felton says, "Because he believed that the grace of baptism was usually lost, Wesley affirmed the need for a subsequent experience of regeneration without denying the validity of the sacramental rebirth."[36]

Henry Knight, after weighing Borgen's emphasis on the continuity of infant and adult Baptism and Bertrand Holland's insistence on their essential difference, tries to return the discussion to a focus on the place of Baptism among the means of grace and in the life of holiness.[37] Knight maintains that Wesley's "normative model of the Christian life is the new born adult, not the baptized infant."[38] Therefore the objective grace of Baptism has different effects depending on the time in a

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[35]Carlton Felton, 38-39.

[36]Ibid., 41.

[37]Knight, 178-180.

[38]Ibid., 181.

person's life it occurs in relation to the new birth. Furthermore, Knight thinks that prudent and frequent use of the means of grace, even by children, may enable them to maintain the grace received in Baptism and grow into the knowledge of God.[39] Certainly the tight organization and accountability structure of early Methodism would have assisted in this even if Wesley did not explicitly state it as a goal, and his concern for the religious instruction of children is well-known.[40]

Interestingly, as both Knight and Carlton Felton emphasize, Wesley did not draw explicit connections between Baptism and later use of the means of grace, especially the power of the Lord's Supper to serve as a strengthening of baptismal grace and a renewal of baptismal commitment.[41] However, such an emphasis is consistent with his theology.

In the end, it is difficult to iron all the inconsistencies out of Wesley's view of Baptism. "There is an inescapable tension," Carlton Felton concludes,

> in Wesley's thought between Catholic and Protestant, between objective and subjective, between ecclesiastical and evangelical. This tension results not in a conflict of elements, but in a creative synthesis.[42]

However, this much can be said: he considered it to be an objective act which bestowed grace and incorporated the recipient

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[39]Ibid., 185-186.

[40]Ibid., 186-187.

[41]Ibid., 189 (he also mentions the covenant service as another such means of grace); Carlton Felton, 42.

[42]Carlton Felton, 48.

into the family of the Church, where further growth in holiness could occur.

The Meaning of the Eucharist

Some of Christendom stands squarely in a memorialist heritage regarding the Eucharist. That was not Wesley's position, as Borgen, J. Ernest Rattenbury, Sanders, and others have made abundantly clear.[43] The most important primary source for Wesley's specific thought in this area, besides his famous sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion"[44], is Wesley's publication (1745) of Hymns on the Lord's Supper together with his "extract" from Daniel Brevint's tract "The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice."[45] Wesley did not merely reprint, but revised and issued Brevint's treatise and the hymns under the name of both Wesleys, and the work as a whole can be taken to represent his views. Brevint considers the Sacrament under seven basic headings: as a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ; as a sign of present graces, both represented and conveyed in the sacrament; as an actual means of grace; as a "pledge of future glory" promising the Heavenly Banquet (this eschatological emphasis became prominent in early Methodism); and

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[43]For a particularly concise explanation, consult Sanders, "Wesley's Eucharistic Faith and Practice," Anglican Theological Review 48 (1966), 157-174.

[44]John Wesley, Works, Sermon CVI. This sermon will be discussed further as it relates to the practice of the Eucharist.

[45]This work is most readily available as an appendage to J. Ernest Rattenbury's The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley, revised American ed. (Cleveland, OH: OSL Publications, 1990). Citations in what follows will come from this volume.

as a sacrifice--first the commemorative sacrifice which, while not repeating Christ's once-for-all oblation, represents and presents it, then the sacrifice and consecration of ourselves which participating in the Eucharist involves, and finally the sacrifice of our goods which must accompany the self-sacrifice.[46] The hymns by the Wesleys (mainly Charles, and including two adaptations of George Herbert) set forth these same doctrines, made alive in Methodist experience; in the words of Rattenbury,

> Charles Wesley gives Brevint wings, and adds very significantly the confirmation of Methodist experience to Brevint's doctrine. In some of his verses he turns the devotional theology of a High-Church Anglican divine into the flaming Methodist Evangel without losing Anglican values...Wesley often falls back on Methodist experience as the supreme verification of his Sacramental theories.[47]

While it is doubtful if either John or Charles Wesley understood experience to be a supreme verification, in these hymns we see the outward sign intertwined in complex ways with the reception of the inward grace. Winter comments on Wesley's belief in the connection that existed between the "sign" and the "signified": "The elements were more than symbols; they were instruments by which Christ communicated the promised benefits of the sacrament to faithful believers."[48]

The Place and Practice of the Eucharist

The high regard which Wesley held the Eucharist in his personal devotion has been well-documented by a study of his

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[46]Rattenbury, 145-163.

[47]Ibid., 10.

[48]Winter, 549.

diaries and journals. Robert Winter cites studies by Thomas Barratt and John Bowmer which imply that, on the average, Wesley probably communicated every four or five days.[49] This was a life-long habit which his evangelical conversion did not alter.

But, beyond his personal journey, how did Wesley see the Eucharist as playing a part in the Methodist revival? Sanders seems quite correct in assessing the Methodist movement as seeking something deeper than liturgics or even restoration of Sacrament without Word:

> Almost certainly the Wesleyan Revival was not in the first instance a sacramental program, but a militant campaign for the hearts, minds, bodies and lives of perishing multitudes of eighteenth-century England. That the Revival resulted in a recrudescence of Eucharistic devotion is of course perfectly true.[50]

Wesley, says Sanders, would not have understood the artificial separation we now often make between evangelical preaching and sacramental observance.[51] Rattenbury develops this idea further as he considers how especially the Hymns on the Lord's Supper served to combine these two strands: "These hymns were Revival hymns, and...Sacramental worship was not only not contrary to Evangelical, but in the eighteenth century, in its intensified form, one of its chief results."[52]

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[49]Ibid., 546-547.

[50]Sanders, "Wesley's Eucharistic Faith," 157.

[51]Ibid., 158.

[52]Rattenbury, 15. He also comments that the note of evangelism as part of Eucharistic celebration is a distinctively Methodist note, consonant with Wesley's view of the Eucharist as a converting ordinance (see Winter, 551).

For Wesley the Eucharist was a necessary and vital means of grace throughout the Christian journey, embedded firmly in a theology which saw all of life in relationship to the reception of grace in the service of developing holiness. In "The Means of Grace," Wesley speaks at length of the place of these means in the Christian life, not as works which earn merit or bring salvation, but as ways of opening ourselves more fully to the reception of the grace which Christ alone can give. He asserts, "All who desire the grace of God, are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained."[53] In modern psychological language, one might say that the means of grace are ways of removing blocks and opening channels to allow God the freedom to work.

Against this background it is easy to see why, in "The Duty of Constant Communion" as well as in other places, Wesley urged the Methodists to avail themselves of this powerful means of grace and occasion for openness to God at every possible opportunity. According to Winter, "Wesley's argument was not merely for more frequent reception of the sacrament," even though his practice and preaching of this stood in contrast to many Church of England and Dissenting Christians.[54] Rather, "Wesley urged his followers to cultivate a relationship of communion with the Lord at all times, and exhorted them to receive the Lord's Supper as a means to that end."[55] Among the benefits Wesley

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[53]Wesley, Standard Sermons, Sermon XVI, 160.

[54]Winter, 552.

[55]Ibid.

cites of constant communion are the forgiveness of past sins and the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls, a position which implies not only some doctrine of Christ's actual presence in the Sacrament but also shows its relation to the life of holiness. He maintained, "This is the food of our souls: this gives strength to perform our duty and leads us on to perfection.[56]

It is no secret that Wesley thought that pardoning, as well as perfecting, grace could be found at the Eucharistic table. Given the fact that he thought grace pervaded all of life, this is not surprising. Winter explains that Wesley encouraged "honest seekers who, though not yet possessing a justifying faith, were already responsive to the Gospel to approach the Lord's Table and enjoy the faith-strengthening benefits of the Holy Supper."[57] This opinion was confirmed and strengthened by his knowledge of his own mother's experience of receiving assuring faith on such an occasion.[58]

The Role of Worship in the Early Methodist Movement

It is well known that Wesley did not intend Methodism to become a church. Yet, from the beginning, Methodists worshipped

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[56]Wesley, Works, Sermon CVI, I.2-3, 350. Note, incidentally, Wesley's appeal in the next section to the practice of the early church as another encouragement towards constant Communion.

[57]Winter, 551.

[58]Ibid.

together in prayer, song, and preaching, in their preaching services and their society and class meetings. Thus began the ambiguous nature of Methodist worship which has plagued the movement ever since.

The original forms of Methodist worship presupposed the existence of the established Church to provide the link with tradition and the sacramental observance which Wesley valued. The Methodist movement's insistence on experimental and experiential religion was intended to address the Church's imbalance in that particular area. Thus, as Sanders argues,

> The proper interpretation of Wesleyan hymnody will see its emphasis on Christian experience as a one element within a larger whole. For Wesley said, Methodist worship was intentionally defective, taking for granted the larger round of liturgical and sacramental practice of the Church.[59]

Thus it was that, at least in the early days of the movement, the Methodist preaching-houses were emphatically not called churches, and their times of meeting were scheduled so as not to conflict with the Established Church's services.[60]

Soon, along with the revival of sacramental devotion within Methodist circles,[61] three forms of worship developed from Wesley's Moravian influence which soon became particularly indigenous to Methodism: the watch night service, the love feast, and the covenant service. It is interesting that the first two

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[59]Sanders, "The Puritans and John Wesley," 14.

[60]White, Protestant Worship, 154.

[61]This was not without its problems, chiefly where the ordination of Methodist preachers was considered.

of these services have obvious parallels with the vigils and agape meals of early church practice. Wesley often appealed to these parallels in their defense. He felt that all three services were firmly grounded in Scripture.[62] In these services, the experience of personal religion was foremost, especially in the watch night services and love feasts. There was a great deal of singing, extemporaneous prayer, and preaching at the watch nights, described humorously by Karen Westerfield Tucker as "a Methodist preaching service on steroids;" the lovefeast emphasized testimony and the collection of alms in addition to singing and prayer.[63] The covenant service was of a more corporate nature, but individual preparation and soul-searching were expected of participants.[64]

As Methodism evolved further away from its original status of ecclesiolae in ecclesia, towards its inevitable self-definition as a church, tensions over ordination and administration of the Sacraments combined to bring services such as these, and the personal devotion they fostered, to the fore. This is not to deny the validity and value of these forms of worship, nor of the preaching services in Methodist chapels. Westerfield Tucker, in fact, is one who is attempting to

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[62]Karen Westerfield Tucker, "Wesleyan Worship and Spirituality," unpublished manuscript of talk given at 1997 Webb Lectures, Illinois Great Rivers Conference (UMC), 7 March 1997, 5-7.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid., 8.

reintroduce such services into modern Methodism as a source of personal and corporate renewal. She recognizes that Sacramental exaltation without a view of how such a Sacramental emphasis fits into the life of holiness only does half the job. Still, Sanders' caveat is worth keeping in mind as the historical evolution of Methodism is studied: Methodist worship is intentionally defective. Joseph Quillian addresses this tension as he considers Wesley's reluctant accommodation to the fact that "the church had come to express itself in a form known as Methodism, whether by Mr. Wesley's design or not."[65] Wesley provided Methodists, in the end, with ordained ministers, forms of liturgy, orders for administering the Sacraments, and a system of discipline for its life together. But did it take? Or as Quillian puts it: "The most valid question that remains is: 'Are we church in <u>form</u> but society in <u>intention</u>?"[66]

Wesley's Intentions for American Methodists: The <u>Sunday Service</u>

By the end of his life, Wesley had reluctantly accommodated himself to the fact that, at least in America, his movement was as much an <u>ecclesia</u> as it was <u>ecclesiolae</u>. When the exigencies of the American Revolution brought him to the point of giving to American Methodists the resources to become an independent church, the model he provided them came straight out of his

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[65]Quillian, 17.

[66]Ibid.

Anglican heritage. Though sensitive to their situation in a young and developing country without the background and history of a long-established national church, he was determined to give them the best of their heritage in the most practical form possible. Just as the Anglican church found its spiritual identity not in an exhaustive theological treatise but in sermons, liturgies, and succinct creeds: the Articles of Religion, Cranmer's Homilies, and the Book of Common Prayer (hereafter BCP); so too would Methodism be constituted by the abridged Articles, the Standard Sermons and Notes on the New Testament, and the Sunday Service (a revision of the BCP for the American situation) along with the Wesley hymns. The echoes of Marshall's description of Anglican spirituality as liturgical and church-focused are particularly evident here. Along with the Sunday Service came newly consecrated superintendent Thomas Coke and the newly ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, in order to make sure that all was done decently and in order.[67]

Wesley's abridgement of the BCP, despite the many adaptations which he made to the new cultural and political situation in America, was at heart, as James White says, "a deeply conservative work, the product of one deeply, though not uncritically, enamored of the BCP."[68] William Nash Wade debates

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[67]Winter, 593.

[68]White, "Introduction" to Sunday Service, 10. Incidentally, by undertaking these revisions Wesley was not alone, nor without precedent. White comments humorously that he was in fact "indulging in a popular eighteenth-century pastime" practiced by, among others, "Puritans, comprehensionists, non-

this conclusion in some of its particulars, especially where Wesley's choice of Scripture and revision of the lectionary are concerned, but comes in the end to a similar conclusion.[69] John Bowmer had earlier pointed out how the revision and abridgement synthesized the two parts of Wesley's personality which critics so often oppose:

> The fact that he made and insisted upon the use of a revision [rather than eliminating the BCP completely] reveals him the Churchman; the manner of the revision on the whole reveals him the evangelical.[70]

As has been noted, Wesley maintained that no other liturgy had more of a "solid, scriptural, rational Piety" than the Church of England.[71] He removed from the Sunday Service all extraneous references to an established state church (nonexistent in America), even rubrics regarding vestments and church buildings, but he preserved the essential nature, flow, and language of the liturgies and made few theological changes.[72] The liturgical changes he made were often for practical reasons and addressed issues about which Anglican worshippers had often objected, such

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jurors, scholars of ancient liturgies, and theological liberals" (13-14).

[69]William Nash Wade, "A History of Public Worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, From 1784-1905" (Ph.D. diss., Notre Dame, 1981), 51-2.

[70]John C. Bowmer, The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1951), 215.

[71]Wesley, Sunday Service, 2.

[72]White, "Introduction," 10-11. Wesley's revision of the Psalter is a subject in its own right and is considered in enlightening specifics by Wade in his detailed analysis, 52-76.

as the length of the Sunday service.[73] Some of these problems had already been addressed in previous revisions by different groups, and Wesley on occasion drew on their work.[74]

What, then, was the faith and worship heritage which Wesley bequeathed to the Americans in this book? White's introduction to the reprint discusses several crucial points, which are corroborated by a study of the Sunday Service in comparison with the BCP. Perhaps the most crucial is the centrality of grace and the means of grace. White argues, "Wesley's vision for the Christian life is firmly built upon the God-given means of grace, particularly sacrament, scripture, and prayer."[75] The centrality of the Eucharist is evident not only in Wesley's prefatory advice to celebrate "the supper of the Lord on every Lord's Day"[76] but in the design of the services themselves. The Anglican practice was to read three services on Sunday, Morning Prayer, the Litany, and the beginning of the Communion service (the ante-communion). Wesley relegated the Litany (and its penitential flavor)[77] to Wednesdays and Fridays, but kept the other two services tied closely together. For example, there is no sermon at Morning

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[73]Winter, 596.

[74]White, "Introduction," 14.

[75]Ibid., 17.

[76]Wesley, Sunday Service, ii. This was radical advice; see Wade, 85-86.

[77]Wade, 86.

Prayer, since it is contained in the Communion service.[78] Also, the first collect at Morning Prayer is to be "the same that is appointed at the Communion,"[79] and Wesley provided one of these for each Sunday.[80] Scripture and prayer were also central to these services, including "extempore" prayer.

As far as the Christian year and the Christian gospel it proclaims are concerned, Wesley's focus was christological above all. The whole cycle of saints was omitted, along with All Saint's Day, and even some celebrations related to the life of Christ (Epiphany, Maundy Thursday) were dropped in order that the emphasis might focus more clearly on the birth and resurrection of Christ, and on the linkage of Sunday's celebration with the resurrection.[81]

Perhaps the most significant theological change was in Wesley's removal or moderation of various references to baptismal regeneration. White contends, "Presumption that regeneration is inevitable seems offensive to Wesley, and so any suggestion of such is abolished."[82] Here the ambiguity of his views on Baptism resurface. In a possibly related change, the rite of confirmation has disappeared. There are good reasons for such an

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[78]Wesley, Sunday Service, 128.

[79]Ibid., 12.

[80]Ibid., 27.

[81]White, "Introduction," 18.

[82]Ibid., 20.

omission, but no one is certain which reasons were Wesley's.[83] Wesley's theology of the ministry is also evident. He was basically conservative regarding the ordained ministry, but also guarded in a somewhat Puritan fashion against too much priestly power. This was especially true regarding absolution. In the Sunday Service prayers to God for blessing and forgiveness replace the pronouncing of these by the priest, and in fact the term "minister" replaces "priest" throughout.[84]

What the observer is left with, then, is "a modified prayerbook tradition which seeks balance between uniformity and freedom, and a blending of evangelical and traditional liturgical practice."[85] It seeks to maintain the best of Anglican heritage, but is modified and enriched by Wesley's sacramental fervor and his concern for the church to provide an avenue where the means of grace could both objectively and subjectively enrich the life of holiness.

Despite Wesley's attempt to provide an adequate worship structure and standard for the Methodists in North America, though, tensions were working beneath the surface, and soon they would bear fruit. Frank Baker put it memorably:

> The paradox in the life of Wesley was that this loyal High Churchman was, against his will, the leader of the largest new Dissenting denomination in England...This combination of

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[83]Ibid., 20-21.

[84]Ibid., 19.

[85]Wade, 52.

> a convinced High Churchman's appreciation of liturgy and the Eucharist with a practical if reluctant recognition of the value of extemporary preaching, free prayer, and hymns made Wesley's liturgical contributions the most important single fact in the history of English Christianity in the eighteenth century.[86]

However, that combination also gave Wesley's successors multiple liturgical personalities at times. It is to this story that the reader is now directed.

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[86]Frank Baker, John Wesley and the Church of England. (New York: Epworth Press, 1976), 184-185.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF METHODIST WORSHIP

Introduction

Between 1784, when the Sunday Service made its treacherous journey across the Atlantic, and the present, there is a long and complex history. There are several major factors--theological, psychological, and historical--which mark the evolution of American Methodism in ambiguous relationship to its heritage. Rather than a strict historical survey, what will be attempted is a topical examination of these chief factors. Their relative importance (and sometimes their very existence) is a matter of great debate. This chapter attempts to synthesize the various theories that have been advanced.

The following topics are worthy of mention historically: the indigenous nature of American Methodism and the cultural characteristics of the new nation; the controversy over sacramental administration and its limitation to ordained elders; and the development of revivalism on both the east coast and the western frontier. Theologically and psychologically, the topics which must be considered are the prevalence of memorialist interpretations of the Sacraments; the continuing tension between form and freedom; and the tension between the concepts of ecclesiola and ecclesia which Wesley himself had bequeathed to Methodism. The result of all these factors was a tendency to

emphasize extraordinary rather than ordinary means of grace.[1]

Indigenous American Methodism

Wesley did not create American Methodism; he only attempted to guide it. Before the Sunday Service arrived it had already been developing for roughly twenty years, beginning with the activity of lay Methodist immigrants, and later aided by British missionaries such as Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor.[2] Most of these missionaries, with the notable exception of Francis Asbury, either returned to England following the outbreak of war or otherwise retired from service. Meanwhile, native American preachers such as Freeborn Garrettson and Jesse Lee had been recruited and soon took leadership in the movement.[3] Asbury, though English by birth, was more American in personality, coming down heavily on the "freedom" side of the freedom/form question. He held neither the Anglican Church nor the Sacraments in high regard, as Wade has demonstrated.[4] White comments succinctly, "Wesley's pragmatism had great appeal to him, Wesley's traditionalism very little."[5]

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[1]For this last point I am indebted to James W. May, "Where Are We in Methodist Worship?" Work/Worship 18, no. 3 (Kingdomtide 1968): 11.

[2]Sanders, "An Appraisal of John Wesley's Sacramentalism," 187-192.

[3]Ibid., 193.

[4]Wade, 156-157.

[5]White, Protestant Worship, 158.

The American nation as a whole, before and after the Revolution, was characterized in general by an individualistic, democratic, and dissenting spirit; American religion both drew from and encouraged these characteristics as both it and the nation grew out of infancy.[6] John Thomas Treadway comments that American culture and theological thought stressed the power of human freedom and response, emphasizing spiritual, political, and cultural results rather than process. The emerging nation distrusted historical complexity and theological mystery. It disliked "ceremony and ostentation" to some extent, and emphasized ecumenicity and fellowship as an ideal goal.[7] After the Revolution there was a feeling of backlash against all things English, not least the Established Church. Large numbers of unchurched people eventually drawn in by the American Methodist movement had had no previous contact with or special love for the Anglican church, its traditions, and its sacramental ministrations. In fact, many had come to faith in a situation totally devoid of the Sacraments, since administration of them was in short supply in Methodism during the Revolution.[8] Earl

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[6]Sanders, "An Appraisal of John Wesley's Sacramentalism," 192-193.

[7]John Thomas Treadway, "Eucharistic Theology in American Protestantism 1820-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1964), 259-265.

[8]Winter, 617, 613. He also remarks, however, that these factors cannot tell the whole story, since researchers (and perhaps the early Methodists as well) have generally failed to note that during this time "many Evangelical Episcopalians found no discrepancy between their Prayer Book worship and vigorous preaching to stir the soul" (613).

Brown corroborates this and adds another dimension when he notes:

> American Methodists in 1784 had lived pretty well without formal ritualistic services for nearly a decade. More than that, they had managed to get along remarkably well without the practice of the traditional sacraments during the war years. The evangelistic service, modeled on the Wesleyan society meeting, spoke more directly to their condition. The intimate association of the class had become their crucial sacrament, their major means of grace.[9]

While many American Methodists were perhaps hungrier for the Sacraments than Brown assumes, a point which the Sacramental Controversy of 1779-1780 illustrates, his basic point is accurate. This is especially true with reference to the emphasis on personal experience of religion characterized by the class meeting and society worship. James May also substantiates this from a later period when he cites Bishop Matthew Simpson's description of Methodist worship opportunities as mainly existing "in terms of class meetings and 'social worship.'"[10]

The Sacramental Controversy, Francis Asbury, and the Demise of the Sunday Service

The American Revolution basically eliminated any possibility of Methodists receiving the Sacrament from the hands of Anglican clergy even if they wanted to.[11] It was this situation which Wesley eventually attempted to remedy by his unusual ordinations in 1784. Before this happened, however, there were in fact

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[9]Earl K. Brown, "Historical Perspectives on Methodist Worship," Religion in Life 39 (Spring 1970): 32.

[10]May, 13.

[11]Wade, 161.

several controversies over who might properly administer the Sacraments in the societies. Both were settled by Francis Asbury in a way consistent with his seemingly low regard for the "ordinances." Wade outlines the evidence from Asbury's journal which shows his infrequent reception of the Eucharist and his attitude that "the sacraments were not deemed as essential for salvation and were more in the category of a 'duty' for him."[12]

First, in 1773, Robert Strawbridge contended for, and in fact practiced, lay administration so that the people might receive the Sacraments as often as they desired.[13] Then, in 1779-1780, two competing conferences were called: an irregular one by Asbury in Delaware, and the legal one in Fluvanna County, VA. The Fluvanna Conference authorized the administration of the Sacraments among its preachers; later, Asbury managed to put a stop to this activity.[14] While Asbury's actions were in the interest of decency and order, not to mention Wesley's expressed desire that the Sacraments be administered by an ordained priesthood, it is also evident that he was

> much more concerned about issues of polity at the expense of a vibrant sacramental worship life which he did not see as necessary, if indeed harmful, to the attainment of sanctification and holiness. For Asbury true sanctification

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[12]Ibid., 158.

[13]Ibid., 157.

[14]Ibid., 165-167, 176. Wade comments that even the attitude towards the "ordinances" by the Fluvanna Conference had a more Reformed than Wesleyan slant.

and holiness was marked by visible emotional states.[15] Wesley's insistence that only properly ordained clergy could administer the Eucharist, a position consistent with his theological thought, ended up working against the transplanting of the sacramental piety he so cherished, especially since Asbury defended this situation in the interest of orderly polity.[16] In a country where some of the above-mentioned historical and cultural factors were at work to mitigate against a high view of the Sacraments, their lack of availability only seemed to exacerbate the situation.

As a result of these kinds of historical considerations, and through the usually unacknowledged leadership of Asbury, the Sunday Service, which had officially been adopted as Methodist liturgy by the Christmas Conference of 1784, was laid aside in 1792. Most of the services and resources were abolished. Others, such as the Lord's Supper, Baptism, orders for marriage and burial, and the ordinal, were abridged. These services, along with the Articles of Religion, which also survived the purge, were placed as an appendix to the Discipline. In summarizing these developments, Winter echoes the comment of Nolan Harmon that, in direct opposition to Wesley who kept the Sunday Service from the BCP and abolished many of its

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[15]Ibid., 176. Wade cites Asbury's Journal, Vol. I for May 1780 where he states that "to press the people to holiness is the proper method to take them from contending for ordinances, or any less consequential things" (351).

[16]Hood, 19.

"occasional" services, "the revisers of 1792 'threw away the Sunday Service, and kept the 'Occasional Services.'"[17] Indeed, this act officially confirmed the growing trend to make the sacramental life of the Church an "occasional" part of Methodism. In the place of Wesley's order for Sunday worship, which had included his insistence on weekly communion, a simple series of instructions were given: "Let the morning-service consist of singing, prayer, the reading of one chapter out of the Old Testament, and another out of the New, and preaching."[18] Gone as well was the guiding hand of the Christian year (and the accompanying lectionary) in the ordering of Christian life and worship.[19] This approach was of course on the whole a great deal simpler and less rigidly determined (not to mention less traditionally enriched and carefully balanced) than Wesley's Sunday Service. Also, it was what the majority of Methodists at the time were probably doing anyway. Jesse Lee's dismissive comment about praying better with one's eyes closed may not have expressed everyone's view, but it was the feeling of at least a

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[17]Nolan B. Harmon, The Rites and Ritual of Episcopal Methodism (Nashville: Publishing House of the MEC, South, 1926), 49. Cited in Winter, 607.

[18]The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, Revised and Approved at the General Conference held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, in November, 1792.... 8th ed. (Philadelphia: Parry Hall, 1792), 40-41. Cited in Winter, 607. Similar directions were issued for afternoon and evening services, and the reading of Scripture was made optional on days when Communion was administered (due to time constraints?)

[19]Winter, 607.

large segment of the movement. What was beginning to take the place of a prayer-book centered church, even then, was an experiential, Discipline-centered one. In the memorable words of Nolan Harmon,

> The ritual [offices]...were kept and bound with a little book which was even then beginning to tower as the great book of our American Methodism, the Discipline, embodying not ordered worship but ordered action, as befits our American activist genius.[20]

Revivalism: Love Feasts and Camp Meetings

The thesis that revivalistic camp meetings were solely frontier phenomena, and that they alone were responsible for "corrupting" early Methodism, has been more recently modified in a way that better reflects the complexity of the situation. Before the camp meeting, there were the love feast and the quarterly meeting, and running as a common thread through all of them was the theme of revival and experiential religion. Francis Asbury's appreciation for the love feast is well-documented, and his influence was key in its popularity. Love feasts were celebrated in conjunction with quarterly meetings and were a key part of early Methodist revivals. They were often celebrated in conjunction with the Eucharist, and indeed may have been more popular than the sacramental celebrations. This was especially true in the early days before a larger number of ordained elders

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[20]Nolan B. Harmon, "Methodist Worship: Practices and Ideals," in Methodism, ed. William K. Anderson (New York: Methodist Publishing House, n.d.), 231.

provided more frequent access to the Sacraments.[21] Winter, drawing on John Bowmer's writings, analyzes the role of the love feast in both British and American Methodism:

> Because the love feast provided a forum for powerful expressions of Methodist religious feeling, the extemporaneously ordered feasts were often more emotionally satisfying than the restrained and reverent eucharistic service, circumscribed as it was by rubrics and liturgical texts in the Prayer Book, Sunday Service, or Discipline.[22]

Fred Hood has pointed out that the love feasts were in fact "the greatest source of fellowship and inspiration among early Methodists and a primary occasion for experiencing great 'freedom'."[23]

As Methodism became more established as a church, and celebrations of the Eucharist more frequent due to the ordination of more elders, the love feast, and the quarterly meetings which it was so often a prominent part of, declined in America. However, the camp meeting contributed to the development of this kind of experiential, testimonial-centered, koinonia-focused worship experience.[24] As Brown's comments imply, the development of revivalism in the American setting found a natural home and encouragement in Methodism. After all, evangelical conversion and experiential religion were no stranger to the Wesleyan

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[21]Winter, 623-625.

[22]Ibid., 627-628.

[23]Fred Hood, "Community and the Rhetoric of 'Freedom:' Early American Methodist Worship," Methodist History 9, no. 1 (October 1970): 24.

[24]Ibid., 25.

heritage.

Russell Ritchey provides an intriguing analysis of the power of camp meetings, especially in the nineteenth century. These meetings, he states, evoked memories and re-enacted a remembered "golden age" of Methodist koinonia and revivalistic emphasis. They were "a ritual recovery of unities, openness, inclusiveness, and flexibility," all highly prized by early Methodists.[25] Ritchey also explains how, through the influence of what he feels to be William Warren Sweet's somewhat defective "frontier reading of American religion," the camp meeting in particular and Methodism in general came to be seen as part of an endless progression of frontier-conquering, non-elitist religion. This gave insufficient attention to Methodist distinctives, struggles, and diversity.[26] Sweet's thesis, for Ritchey, seems insufficient to explain the camp meeting's emergence as a quasi-official organ of Methodism.[27] Ritchey also notes that, contrary to camp meetings being a cause of revivalistic Methodism, they were more in the nature of a result. The continuity between earlier conferences and quarterly meetings and the later camp meetings "calls attention to an insufficiently stressed characteristic of

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[25]Russell E. Ritchey, "From Quarterly to Camp Meeting: A Reconstruction of Early American Methodism," Methodist History 23, no. 1 (July 1985): 203.

[26]Ibid., 200. See also Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957; reprint with afterword, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), especially pp. 7-10 and 249-251.

[27]Ritchey., 210.

early Methodist revivals. They were seated in conference, in quarterly meeting and in annual conference."[28] As these conferences became more concerned with business and administration, the camp meeting gatherings for fellowship and worship took up where quarterly and conference meetings had left off.[29] Hood summarizes the situation:

> All of the major elements of the early camp meetings, which became so important in Methodism and American Protestantism generally after 1800, were present in these early quarterly meetings. The camp meeting thus became the finest expression of 'liberty' and 'freedom' in worship and symbolized community and uniformity rather than 'frontier individualism.'[30]

American Sacramental Theology

From historical reasons this investigation now turns to some of the theological and psychological aspects of the story. American sacramental theology has become one of the most crucial and controversial developments within Methodist historiography. Sanders originally diagnosed that a memorialistic interpretation of the Sacraments, along with the "evangelical" strain of Wesley's thought, had the field all to itself. He concluded that:

> Evangelism and sacramentalism which in Wesley were joined in fruitful synthesis were by the Americans, partly on principle, more largely perhaps because of their Sitz im Leben, put asunder. While there is not evidence that the sacraments were actually disparaged [in America], neither is

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[28]Ibid., 212.

[29]Ibid., 209.

[30]Hood, 25.

> there evidence of the keen appreciation which was consistent in Wesley.[31]

John Thomas Treadway objected to Sanders' conclusions. His analysis of the evidence in a later study of the Eucharistic theology of American Protestantism led him to insist that Wesley's sacramental theology was not "so 'high' as Sanders suggests" and that his theological emphasis on the Sacrament as a means of Real Presence and real grace was "not totally corrupted" in America.[32] Treadway cites evidence, especially from later in the nineteenth century, of theologians who at least entertained a more "Wesleyan" view (i.e. A.A. Jimeson in his Notes on the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion [1853], and Samuel Luckey, The Lord's Supper [1859]). Treadway says of Luckey, after analyzing his thought in some detail,

> To this man the Supper was not simply a memorial; it was the means by which the Christian received spiritual nourishment, the nourishment promised by Jesus in St. John 6. To ignore the Eucharist was certain to bring about a state of spiritual malnutrition.[33]

He also cites A. H. Ames, a pastor from Baltimore, who in an essay in the Methodist Quarterly Review (1873) recognized the connection between Sacrament and ecclesiology, and realized as well the fact that

> Sacramental Christianity enjoys the advantage over what he terms Protestantism of giving the sacraments something of the objective force with which the New Testament invests

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[31]Sanders, "An Appraisal of John Wesley's Sacramentalism," 488.

[32]Treadway, 252.

[33]Ibid., 247.

> them, and...the tradition in which he places himself does not always do justice to this objective sacramental reality.[34]

The truth probably lies somewhere between Sanders' helpful general conclusion and Treadway's insistence on the complexity of the evidence. Treadway himself admits that, on the practical level, "Sanders is correct in assuming that...the frontier situation militated against giving the Sacrament a proper place in the on-going life of the Church."[35] And, even when he discusses the views of Jimeson and Luckey, he mentions that "Luckey, unlike most nineteenth century theologians [emphasis mine] does not find the idea of mystery unacceptable and is willing to treat Communion as something more than a simply rational memorial."[36] This implies that, though such authors as Luckey certainly contributed to the diversity and complexity of American sacramental opinion, they seem to have been in the minority. Treadway admits that, at the very least, there is a great difference in emphasis and mood between Wesleyan (British Methodist) sacramental piety and that of American Methodism. In the end he concludes that memorialism and revivalism certainly nourished each other in the development of American religion westward.[37]

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[34]Ibid., 251.

[35]Ibid., 252.

[36]Ibid., 246.

[37]Ibid., 237-238, 259. Treadway maintains that this attitude was more characteristic of Methodism's rank-and-file than its leaders, though it is interesting to remember who was

Freedom and the Extraordinary Means of Grace

Freedom in the new republic, especially in the early stages of its history, was as much a psychological ideal as it was a political one. Discussions of the individualistic nature of the American personality earlier in this century have often failed to emphasize the degree to which community and "brotherhood" also functioned as ideals and arenas to express this freedom.[38] Hood notes that, although freedom and liberty were proclaimed as ideals for worship, they were determined in community context and "thus the community rather than the liturgy became the standard for acceptable worship."[39] The concept of freedom had a dual meaning, according to Hood; not only "preaching and praying which came most freely in an extemporaneous delivery but also that which found greatest acceptance from the congregation."[40] Because of this, preachers were sometimes led to neglect preparation, feeling more comfortable drawing on "the store of ideas and opinions most accepted by the community" in the moment of delivery.[41] This led worshippers to a value the parts of the worship service where the greatest degree of freedom was to be found--preaching, prayer, and to a certain degree singing. It

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contending for the Sacrament and who was forbidding its administration in Asbury's day.

[38]These ideas are developed at length in the article by Hood, to which this writer is greatly indebted.

[39]Hood, 13.

[40]Ibid., 15.

[41]Ibid.

also tended to devalue worship's more structured or traditional aspects, such as the reading of Scripture; and the celebration of the Eucharist, which, even at minimum, was bound by the Prayer of Consecration.[42]

Later Methodists of the nineteenth century, as Wade notes, sensed that perhaps this emphasis had gone too far and attempted to redress it. T. O. Summers was the most famous of these, but not the only one.[43] Wade's careful study of the official forms of Methodist worship in successive Disciplines has shown that, at least among Methodist leadership, there began to be "an emerging interest in liturgical matters and a concern for a more disciplined and uniform public worship according to the written forms found in the Discipline," including restoration of the apostolic benediction and the Lord's Prayer.[44] There was also a renewal of interest (especially among Southern Methodists) in Wesley's intentions and theology. This was seen in the desire by some for a reprint of Wesley's Sunday Service and permission to use it. Summers was almost certainly behind this movement. Also, there was an adoption in the Southern Discipline (1870) of instructions for the Eucharist to be administered monthly (Summers' influence here felt again).[45] How far this had an effect is less sure; ignoring the official pronouncements of the

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[42]Ibid., 16-19.

[43]Wade, 252, 271-273. See also Phillips, 241-253.

[44]Wade, 252.

[45]Ibid., 275, 281.

Discipline on all but bureaucratic matters has long been a Methodist hallmark. In all likelihood, the "rhetoric of freedom" was not too far behind.[46]

James May, drawing on the work of Sidney Mead in studying denominationalism, adds to this discussion three historical and psychological factors which were particularly characteristic of the American experience: voluntaryism, historylessness, and revivalism.[47] The voluntary nature of American religious choice, where no state Church was prescribed, was certainly part of the whole emphasis on "freedom." (It would fuel the later drive toward ecumenism as well). May states,

> Practical considerations were pushed to the fore and discussion of theology and forms of worship was considered divisive.... Written large in the American experience is the principle that the individual has the right to worship as he chooses. These matters are not discussed. If his taste differs he may go elsewhere and worship according to his desires.[48]

The importance of the community situation again emerges in tandem with the emphasis on individualism. What is sought first and foremost by the American religious practitioner is not theological correctness or even cradle-to-grave nurture, but

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[46]As Robert Peiffer commented about the lack of success of a much later group of liturgical revisers: "Given the optional character of United Methodist liturgical texts, perhaps that is not surprising. Routinely United Methodist pastors substitute alternative liturgies for denominational rites which they find undesirable. "'Every United Methodist pastor does what is right in his or her own eyes,' [Richard] Collman has observed. 'Every minister has his or her own mimeograph machine and creates a service to his or her liking'" (313).

[47]May, 9-10.

[48]Ibid., 10.

like-minded fellowship.

A sense of historylessness, a Reformation idea congenial to an America which had just severed Old World ties, also contributed to the situation. May demonstrates fairly convincingly that, though the Reformers would never have expressed this as their aim, the seeds of historical suspicion were sown by them in their distrust of the Catholic cultus and the tradition it represented.[49] This "fear of Rome" still has echoes in some circles of Methodist worship today, especially evangelical ones.[50] In the American situation, where pragmatic results almost always governed the employment of historical norms, and where the primitive was often held up as the ideal, such ideas were naturally congenial. May cites historian of Christianity Kenneth Scott Latourette:

> Professor Latourette has pointed out that American Protestantism in the 19th century has tended to ignore all that took place in Old World Christianity after the first century.[51]

The Methodist emphasis on freedom and community, enriched by a suspicion of history, thus bore fruit, according to May, in three major peculiarities of Methodist worship: substituting the extraordinary (and extraliturgical) means of grace, from love

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[49]Ibid., 5-6.

[50]To quote an extreme example, the following remark was recently relayed to this author as a guiding instruction in preparation for pastoral ministry: "Now, don't go back to Illinois and use any bells and whistles and incense. I wouldn't even wear a collar."

[51]May, 10.

feast to camp meeting, in place of the ordinary ones, especially the Eucharist; giving to these new forms of worship "the status of an official cultus...a new liturgical apparatus"; and continuing to confuse Methodism's function as a society (ecclesiola) with a necessary fostering of communal growth and experiences, and its function as a church (ecclesia) which has a responsibility to preserve tradition and surround life with something larger than personal experience.[52]

Such, by and large, was the psychological and theological state of Methodist worship through the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. However this prevailing mood was often challenged by dissenting voices such as Jimeson, Luckey, Summers, and Harmon. In the 1960's, when so much else in the world erupted, the heirs of some of these dissenting voices erupted as well. The next chapter will seek to assess both the gains and the failures of Methodism's most recent liturgical renewal, and to discover in the failures seeds for future growth.

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[52]Ibid., 11-12.

CHAPTER 4

THE CRITICISM OF METHODIST WORSHIP

Introduction

Methodist liturgical and sacramental renewal did not, as the last chapter has shown, begin with the exploding developments of the 1960's that followed Vatican II in both Protestant and Catholic circles.[1] However, this is certainly when the renewal movement gained wider notice.

Out of this upheaval, a number of important figures emerged in Methodist worship, some of whom have already been cited as authorities in the previous chapters. The writings of Harmon and Sanders laid a groundwork, the influences of Albert Outler and Joseph Quillian were felt early on, and an impossibly large amount of material emerged from the mouth and pen of James White throughout. More recent liturgical and sacramental scholars have included Hoyt Hickman, Don Saliers, Laurence Stookey, Karen Westerfield Tucker, and Geoffrey Wainwright. The Order of St. Luke, although more influential only recently, remained a persistent gadfly in the background. Continuity in this movement with the previous attempts at Methodist liturgical renewal can be seen in many ways. However, important differences are also becoming apparent.

Looking at Methodist worship in the context of the

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[1]White, New Forms of Worship, 15.

contemporary world, it will be useful to examine four aspects of recent liturgical renewal: what the reformers saw as the problem; how they attempted to solve it; where they have succeeded; and what they have yet to achieve.

The Problems Which Sparked Renewal

Diagnosing the problems present in the way Methodists worshipped was as much a 1960's-1970's pastime as revising the Prayer Book was for Wesley in the 1700's. Methodist reformers were encouraged in this task by Roman Catholicism's response to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963) and the resulting revision of Catholic liturgies which emerged from Vatican II.[2] The problems which the reformers addressed focused on three areas: ecclesiology; philosophy; and theology.

Ambivalent Methodist Identity: A Faulty Ecclesiology

The tension between Methodism's heritage as a society and its existence as a church has already been noted. In the words of William Dunkle,

> The difference between a denomination and a sect is that the former is concerned about its catholicity while the latter in its self-sufficiency doesn't even care whether or not it is catholic.[3]

The reformers argued that Methodism has been characterized by more of the latter attitude.

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[2]Dennis C. Smolarski, S.J., Liturgical Literacy: From Anamnesis to Worship (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 89.

[3]William F. Dunkle, Values in the Church Year for Evangelical Protestantism (Nashville: Abingdon, 1959), 11.

Quillian was probably the first to raise this issue in a systematic way. He notes that there are two meanings of the word "society": the first sense is "a limited movement within the church which assumes the same dependence upon God's grace which the church assumes, but which does not take upon itself the obligation to be the whole church or to do the whole work of the church," and the second a group of "like-minded people who have banded together for mutual enlightenment, encouragement, and planning, and for joint endeavor in achieving common goals."[4] Methodism obviously began as a society in the first sense. The question, Quillian says, is whether, though it now has the outward forms of a church in its Sacraments, ordinations, and worship services, it is really still a society in the second sense. He questions

> whether what goes on in the Methodist Church is primarily God's doing through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, or our doing through the use of the terms and symbols of the church as we seek to realize certain human ideals.[5]

The evidence seems to point to the latter statement. Vergil Queen, a pastor and member of O.S.L., considered this very identity crisis to be at the heart of the problems within Methodism. He notes two points:

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[4]Quillian, 16.

[5]Ibid., 17. See also May, 9, where May cites John Locke's definition of the Church as "a voluntary association of men 'joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to do the public worshipping of God in such a manner as they may judge acceptable to Him and effectual to the salvation of their souls.'"

> (a) The present crisis [1963] in Methodism's low spiritual state derives directly from a massive and pandemic neglect of its sacramental life,
> and (b) this loss of the sacramental life stems directly from Methodism's failure in modern times to accept and play the role of a churchly type of Christianity.[6]

Although Queen's discussion as a whole is a little hard on the past history of Methodism, and blatantly anti-evangelical, he <u>has</u> addressed one aspect of the problem. His analysis of the location of the crisis is fourfold: it is ecclesiological, theological, liturgical (his term for considering the Gospel's proclamation as involving more than preaching), and sacramental.[7] Both Queen and Quillian agree that any body proclaiming itself as a church needs to be one where the "pure word of God is preached and the Sacraments duly administered," as Article XIII of the Articles of Religion firmly state.[8] In their opinion, Methodism seems to be falling down on the job where the second is concerned.

One of the results of Methodism's identity crisis, according to these critics, is a lack of the balance between the evangelical and the sacramental that was evident in Wesley and the best of the Anglican tradition. As Queen explains:

> Sometimes it is observed that the seat of authority in Methodist theology is the <u>inner witness</u>; but this emphasis on the <u>inner witness</u> does not stand alone (as some erroneously suppose)....[it] must be validated in Ethics

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[6]Vergil E. Queen, "Methodism and the Holy Communion," <u>Versicle</u> 13, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1963): 5.

[7]Ibid., 10.

[8]"Articles of Religion" XIII, <u>The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 1992</u>, 61.

> (Conduct) as an <u>outer witness</u>, and dramatized in <u>Liturgy</u> (Sacrament).[9]

This author would add to Queen's thesis the theory that, perhaps, the over-emphasis on the "inner witness" and personal experiential faith so dear to evangelical hearts, when practiced without a counterbalancing full-bodied understanding of the church, sowed the seeds of the drift towards theological liberalism which many evangelicals are now protesting. Michael J. Taylor implies as much when studying Methodist liturgical renewal from a Catholic viewpoint. He laments:

> These destructive elements[10] are the lack of both doctrinal and practical discipline, inevitably inducing a liberal attitude towards Christian doctrine and liturgical practice, sometimes ending in an unhealthy individualism and the projection of a kind of private morality.[11]

<u>Limiting Truth to the Verbal: A Faulty Philosophy</u>

Another area where the reformers found fault was in Methodism's uncritical appropriation of its Protestant Reformation heritage and Enlightenment influences. May's comments in the last chapter touched briefly on this issue, especially the nature of anti-Catholic and anti-cultic suspicion. He felt that this suspicion served to

> magnify the sectarian character of worship, to sharpen distrust of tradition and history, to avoid emphasis upon worship as corporate discipline, to suspect every emphasis upon liturgical uniformity, and in general to downgrade the

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[9]Queen, 11-12.

[10]This was his term for the elements the liturgical reformers were reacting against, and was drawn from their own reaction, not necessarily an objective description.

[11]Taylor, 159.

sacramental and to encourage the anti-clerical.[12]

The later influence of rationalism and pietism, despite their valuable contributions, encouraged rather than critically evaluated these kinds of developments, especially since both movements valued individual freedom and distrusted institutional authority and tradition. Taylor contends,

> For the pietist, subjective religious experience was basic. For the rationalist, reason was the final arbiter....both movements set the individual free to form such associations as seemed good to him.[13]

At a deeper level than mere psychological distrust, the Reformation provided a different theological framework than that of classic and Catholic Christianity for the nature of epistemology. This framework had direct implications for the nature of worship. Taylor remarks offhandedly, "Pastors admit that it is very difficult to convince the people that worship should be partially sacramental in structure, when they have been accustomed to look upon it as exclusively a prophetical experience."[14] The roots of this verbal and prophetic view, according to White, lie in the historical coincidence and combination of the Reformation with the communications revolution of the printing press.[15] The availability of cheap books for private reading contributed to an emphasis on perceiving reality

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[12]May, 6.

[13]Ibid., 8-9.

[14]Taylor, 162.

[15]White, New Forms of Worship, 21.

as individual rather than corporate, detached rather than personal, intellectual rather than emotional. It encouraged a linear progression of ideas and argument instead of the instantaneous randomness of life.

> Reading heightened their individualistic self-reliance. It also pushed them to approach reality in terms of sequential analysis....At the same time, the senses of taste, touch, and smell, instantaneous in impact and completely absent from printing, were eclipsed.[16]

The effects of this were not, of course, uniformly negative. As White recognizes, literacy made possible greater congregational participation and raised the status of the laity, who could now read from the same resources as the clergy. This became something more nearly approaching the "priesthood of all believers."[17] However, in conjunction with the Reformers' reaction against the corruption and impurity, excessive ostentation, sacerdotalism, and distorted theology of the Catholic Church of their day, the focus on literacy led to an emphasis on the written and spoken word (and Word) as the only means of worship and proclamation. It also emphasized linear progression (whether through the Bible or the daily office) as the main means of discovering the content of the Gospel and encountering God's grace and spiritual direction.[18] For Protestants, says White, "worship came to be equated with the

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[16]Ibid., 23.

[17]Ibid., 24.

[18]Ibid., 25-26. This linear mentality was, White thinks, the main reason for the demise of the Christian year.

reading, singing, and speaking of words."[19] In the process a great deal of gesture, art, and mystery were lost.

No one is arguing that the verbal proclamation of the Word is a negative thing, nor that good preaching is not an essential part of rightly ordered worship. Outler evaluates the Reformation's intent positively when he says,

> We have, in formal commitment and general profession at least, retained our central Protestant stress on the liturgy of the Word. The primary thing is the proclamation of the gospel, the witness to the judgement and mercy of God in Christ, the offer of reconciliation and the renewal of our human nature....Preaching is still our principal cultic form, our paradigm of worship, our chief type of man at attention before God, calling other men to attention before God.[20]

However, in the process, he says, we have allowed other forms of worship and means of grace, <u>especially</u> Baptism and the Eucharist, to be defined solely in terms of this preaching paradigm.[21] Verbal proclamation is not the only kind of proclamation. Nor is proclamation the only thing that happens when the faithful gather in worship. Outler goes on to say,

> True worship is always bi-polar: the Word and the Sacraments...the Sacraments are not other forms of proclamations of the gospel. They are distinctive modes of present divine action. Sacramental worship is the appropriate receiving and appropriating in the church what God does...because of the divine initiative rather than our respective personal testimonies or commentaries as these are

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[19]Ibid., 27.

[20]Outler, 5.

[21]Ibid.

expressed in other cultic actions.[22]

Human Effort, not Human Openness: A Faulty Theology

Earlier comments such as Outler's have occasionally referenced the American Methodist stress on human rather than divine initiative; human initiative interested in the achieving of results and the creating of emotional experiences. White refers to the dominance in earlier Methodism (roughly 1875-1920) of Charles Finney's opinions on the nature of and the need for worship.

> Worship tended to become a means to an end, the making of converts and the nurturing of those already converted....Finney's book [Lectures on Revivals of Religion] is a how-to manual, with the results almost guaranteed if one follows the proper techniques. Plant the proper grain, and the wheat will appear...Behind all this is the pragmatic optimism of the time.[23]

Even as Methodism became more formal and aesthetic and less spontaneous as the century progressed, the human-centered focus remained: "It was worship in good form, in which nothing overmuch prevailed....Worship could continue to be a meaningful though highly subjective experience."[24]

An article by Robert Goodloe on the Eucharist from the 1950's is a prime example of the attitude which Outler and White

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[22]Ibid., 6. This author would nuance this by adding that, in her opinion, although the Sacraments do not exist merely as "silent preaching" or other forms of proclamation, there are certainly times when the Gospel is proclaimed very powerfully through them.

[23]James F. White, Christian Worship in Tradition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), 78-79.

[24]Ibid., 82.

criticize. As he considers the necessity of ordination for sacramental administration, Goodloe is led to consider the nature of Sacraments. For him, as for Francis Asbury, Sacraments are a duty and an ordinance. Moreover, as a good rationalist, the means of grace for him are places where worshippers seek to understand grace, not appropriate it. Goodloe explains Wesley thus: "In substance, Wesley said, the great task of the Church is to bring to consciousness in men [emphasis mine] the grace, the loving-kindness, of God."[25] This leads him to say,

> The usefulness of the Lord's Supper rests in the ability of the elements employed to suggest to the worshipper the fact of the love of God as manifested on the cross.[26]

Later he comments that unlike Catholics, Methodists do not believe that the Holy Spirit is imparted at ordination.[27] He also cites Nathan Bangs' comment that ordination merely gives human authority to the ordinand to exercise gifts which he already possesses.[28] Subtly but surely, the fact of God's objective acts of grace is replaced by a focus on human understanding and recognition as key.

Behind this nervousness with grace, perhaps, there lies a deeper psychological and ultimately theological fear of exactly what it means to surrender in openness to the divine initiative

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[25]Robert W. Goodloe, "Methodism and the Sacraments," Perkins School of Theology Journal 4, no. 3 (Spring 1951): 4.

[26]Ibid., 5.

[27]Ibid., 6.

[28]Ibid. Incidentally, in 1951 the ordinand would only have been a he, not a she.

and lose control. Among his criticisms, this is perhaps Quillian's most pungent and haunting:

> In Methodism's official and semi-official statements...the recognition of the primacy of God's action is reiterated time and again, but in many of our practices the primacy of human endeavor is explicit as well as implicit....a 'subjective decisionism' in apparent unawareness of our dependence upon the Holy Spirit for both faith and works of faith.[29]

How is this acted out in worship? Quillian gives a number of examples which will be very familiar to the average parishioner:

> In our increasing practice of referring to infant baptism as 'infant dedication;' in our treating adult baptism more as a private transaction conducted in a public place rather than as a corporate act of the church; in our receiving members without previous or subsequent instruction in the nature and duties of the faith; in our infrequent and truncated celebrations of the Holy Communion, with the emphasis being on human remembrance and human rededication rather than upon the present evangelical efficacy of the 'sacrifice once offered;' in the poorly-read, de-contexted Scripture that we have in morning and evening services in the stead of a stalwart Lesson from the Word of God, which further is seldom related to the sermon as more than a 'pretextial' launching platform...in our anxieties concerning formalism in worship, which occasionally may be justified, but which often are the spawn of our lack of familiarity with the worship practices of the historical and present church, and which sometimes may even be an expression of embarrassment at the though of God really and objectively present among us in this service of worship [emphasis mine]....[30]

He concludes,

> In all of these there are more than intimations that our unacknowledged intentions are more nearly that of a human society rather than that of a community of faith that is the church of Jesus Christ.[31]

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[29]Quillian, 17.

[30]Quillian, 17-18.

[31]Quillian, 18.

Attempts at a Solution

Considering these problems, those interested in reforming Methodist worship began to coalesce around a particular agenda for reform. Centralized in a recovery of Sacrament and Scripture for Methodism, and coupled with a discovery of the importance of the first four Christian centuries, this agenda involved other related topics such as the function of liturgical space and time, architecture, and music. Summarizing the gains of the movement in 1982, James White wrote of twelve reforms which he not only felt were personally advisable but which he claimed were "generally advocated by almost all those working in this crusade:"

> (1) Understanding worship as the church's contribution to the struggle for justice.
> (2) Returning to the paschal nature of Christian worship (grounded in the Resurrection).
> (3) Recovering the centrality of the Bible.
> (4) Rediscovering the importance of the Christian Year as a way to structure time.
> (5) Rethinking the process of Christian initiation.
> (6) Recovering the Eucharist as the normative Sunday service.
> (7) Understanding a "sense of God's action in other 'commonly-called sacraments.'"
> (8) Seeing music as an enabler of congregational participation.
> (9) Changing and restructuring the space and furnishings for worship.
> (10) Developing all reforms ecumenically,
> (11) Teaching seminarians and clergy to consider these issues.
> (12) Realizing that "liturgical renewal is not just a changing of worship but is part of a reshaping of American Christianity root and branch."[32]

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[32]White, "A Protestant Worship Manifesto," 83-86. See also his "The Constitution on the Liturgy: Agenda for Protestant Reform," Modern Liturgy 10, no. 4 (May 1983): 8-10.

The reformers' advocate of a weekly Eucharist as normative and their desire to think through the process of Christian initiation[33] more consistently betray not just a deeper focus on the Sacraments but also a desire to understand Methodism's relationship to what it means to be a Church. Carlton Felton wrote, at the end of her discussion of the baptismal history of Methodism, "Revitalization for contemporary United Methodism will not occur unless or until we are able to achieve substantive clarity and consensus on these crucial issues."[34] She added, "An intentional, continual process of nurture is the coupling needed to link infant baptism to more mature experiences of personal conversion and commitment,"[35] not to mention the use of the means of grace.

The greatest difference from earlier attempts at reform seen in the previous chapter was an overwhelming desire to fit Methodism into the picture of world and historic Christianity, rather than simply recovering its Wesleyan identity. For example, White notes that the twelve suggested reforms were not, in his view, limited to Methodism, but should be a common reform agenda for Protestantism as a whole.[36] Emphases on the early church as a source for ideas and practice, and on liturgical

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[33]i.e., infant and adult Baptism, membership education and discipline, and the awkward status of confirmation.

[34]Carlton Felton, 172.

[35]Ibid., 179.

[36]White, "A Protestant Worship Manifesto," 82.

reform as one avenue to ecumenical fellowship, began to come to the fore.

This agenda of the reformers, as will be seen, had some implications for the extent of Methodist tradition which was preserved in their reform. In Christian Worship in Transition, written early in the reformation process, White distinguishes seven different worship traditions: Lutheran, Reformed, Free Church, Anglican, Methodist, Quaker, and Pentecostal. He treats each in turn and their relationships to each other, and is rather hard on what happened to his own in America:

> John Wesley, Methodism's founder, had catholic tastes like Cranmer. He drew on his patristic scholarship, Moravian pietism, the Church of England, and the Puritans to form a marvelous synthesis of evangelical and sacramental forms of worship. Unfortunately, Wesley's strong eucharistic piety did not survive hs generation or weather the trip across the Atlantic....The other side of Methodism developed--the folksy side with its fervent preaching, warm hymn-singing, and ardent, extempore prayer.[37]

He concludes, "Only the hymnody and style of preaching distinguished [American] Methodist worship from its Free Church neighbors, and even those distinctions rapidly melted in nineteenth-century America."[38]

Besides distrusting the evangelical heritage of Methodism, the reformers also felt that previous movements aimed at enriching Methodist worship had dealt with aesthetics and liturgics more than theological issues. This was especially true of the 1920's-40's. White remarks,

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[37]White, Christian Worship in Transition, 72.

[38]Ibid.

> The first half of our period of respectability, roughly 1920-1945, saw a substitution for worship as a conversion experience (or renewal of such an experience) of worship as an aesthetic experience...My home-town church built a new stone Gothic building in the 1920's and immediately decided to forbid congregational 'amens' during the sermon.[39]

Taylor quotes an anonymous pastor from a questionnaire he conducted regarding liturgical and sacramental renewal in Methodism (his book was written at the very end of the 1950's):

> It would be a tragedy to assume the 'trappings' of worship without getting any insights into the spirit of worship. I have known some Methodists who have built wonderfully 'liturgical churches' and who often don't know what to do with them. They are going 'high church' in externals while their theology is...confused.[40]

In a sense, what White and the other reformers intended was to rescue Methodism from itself and from its captivity to what they saw as both the folksiness and bourgeoisness of American culture. To do that, they looked beyond and behind Wesley into early church practices.[41] They looked around him at other denominations, especially those which did not partake of the Free Church worship heritage. They looked ahead of him at some of the creative and unusual experiments in worship taking place in the 1960's and early 1970's. They seldom looked <u>at</u> him, though they professed allegiance to his ideas, and they seldom looked at or at the past two hundred years of their own heritage, which they perceived as having been misguided from the start. All of this

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[39]White, <u>Christian Worship in Transition</u>, 80-81.

[40]Taylor, 162.

[41]This is <u>not</u> meant to imply that drawing assistance from the early church was not in itself a Wesleyan thing to do.

affected the answer their liturgies gave to what it meant to be not only a Christian but a Methodist Christian in particular.

In the light of what these reformers saw as their differences with past movements, it is interesting to compare their cited agenda for renewal with the suggestions that Harmon had advocated some twenty years previous (c. 1947) in his essay in Methodism. Harmon valued order, decency, aesthetic appeal (perhaps a bit too much), and a common and uniform order of worship. He commented,

> Our people have come to appreciate and enjoy a well-ordered and well-conducted service today more than ever before, and all of us love a 'churchly church', as we should.[42]

Harmon also rightly objected to liturgics for the sake of liturgics and to unusual innovations with no theological basis. He called for more congregational participation (the eternal cry), and advocated use of the full ritual in the celebration of the Eucharist.[43] Yet, he did not question the basic order or heritage of the Methodist service, but rather accepted uncritically, to cite two important examples, the use of a pastoral prayer and the placement of the offering and creed before the sermon. (Later reformers questioned both of these in the light of early church practices.) Though he valued the Eucharist highly, he did not conceive of celebrating it weekly, and objected to its celebration at Christmas, stating, "For practical as well as theological reasons, I do not think it

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[42]Harmon, 235.

[43]Ibid., 238.

belongs there in Protestantism."[44] He thereby revealed that he conceived of the Eucharist more as a penitential rite than as the joyful celebration of the mysteries of the faith which the later reformers advocated. Finally, he conceived of the sermon as the heart and high point of Protestant and especially of Methodist worship, rather than seeking a balance of Word and Sacrament each Sunday.[45]

Two parallel journeys of reform soon evolved within Methodism. White had commented that four lines of "attack" were necessary in order to bring the renewal to fruition: teaching worship seriously in the seminaries, developing denominational resources, introducing new service materials, and adding to the substantial books and periodicals available in the area.[46] Literature regarding seminary reform is extremely difficult to come by. However, the other three areas have received greater study, thanks mainly to an excruciatingly detailed dissertation by Robert Peiffer which chronicles the activities of some of the main reformers on behalf of the denomination.[47]

The first attempt at reform resolved around both revision of

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[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., 238-239.

[46]White, "A Liturgical Strategy," 243-245.

[47]Peiffer had access to roughly 10,000 uncataloged items from the files of the United Methodist Church Section on Worship, and conducted over forty hours of oral interviews with ten major figures involved in the revision of Methodist liturgies (Peiffer v). Transcripts of the interviews are now housed in the United Methodist Archives at Drew University, Madison, NJ.

denominational resources and development of new service materials. From about 1968 (the time of merger with the Evangelical United Brethren) to the late 1980's, leading Methodist experts in liturgics and worship (White, Hickman, Saliers, Stookey, Paul Hoon, and others) were involved in what was originally known as the Alternate Rituals Committee. This committee was charged to develop new resources for the denomination in the wake of upheavals in worship generally as well as the merger which had created a new church.[48] Peiffer cites Hickman's identification of four factors which were especially influential in the reformers' work:

> ...efforts to incorporate A) the historical and B) the ecumenical witness of the universal church, to acknowledge C) the United Methodist liturgical heritage, and to address D) the condition of contemporary United Methodists.[49]

These were ambitious and thoughtful goals. Their long liturgical journey culminated in the release in 1989 of the United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship, followed in 1992 by the United Methodist Book of Worship and a number of additional resourc

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[48]Peiffer, iii.

[49]Ibid., 247-248.

[50]Ibid., 246; United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989); United Methodist Book of Worship (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992); hereafter abbreviated UMH and UMBOW. The introduction to the UMBOW, articulating a commitment to the goals of the reformers, notes,

> This book acknowledges our Anglican liturgical heritage and celebrates worship out of our cultural and ethnic diversity. It witnesses to our Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist heritage. Women, men, youth, and children have all contributed to the rich variety of ways of speaking with God in corporate worship. Underlying this diversity and

Meanwhile, another line of reform which focused on developing service materials and producing publications was developing through the continual activity of the Order of St. Luke (hereafter O.S.L.). Originally called the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship, it was founded in 1946 as a small organization of pastors. At least in its inception, O.S.L. focused more on sacramental renewal both personally and corporately, than on detailed studies of liturgics. The Rule of Life and Service says of the Eucharist:

> [It] sustains the Christian's life by re-presenting the life-gift of Christ, in which the living spirit of Christ is truly present to us, preserving and reforming his Body, and providing us the spiritual nourishment that empowers us to live in a positive, healing way before the world.[51]

Regarding Baptism:

> The Church is the redemptive Body of Jesus Christ and...the Sacrament of Baptism is the means of grace for entrance into that redemptive fellowship.[52]

The earliest version of the Rule, dating from the period when O.S.L. was mainly a clerical organization, held up these standards:

> (1) We live for the church of Jesus Christ;
> (2) we promote the public worship of the church;
> (3) we hold the validity of the ministerial office...
> (4) we seek the devout life...
> (5) we magnify the Sacraments...
> (6) we strive for the cure of souls...

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variety, however, is the one God who calls us to be disciples of Christ Jesus (3).

[51]Order of St. Luke, 5.

[52]Ibid., 6.

> (7) we seek to prepare the baptized for life in the church.[53]

Later, the Order developed a fuller role for and awareness of the laity, and also became unafraid to study more specific liturgical resources from the early church, womens' spirituality, and the Eastern Christian tradition. Along the way there has been at least a concern for appropriating these in a way that is practical for the average person in the pew, although this sometimes comes across in a rather patronizing way.[54]

Easily the greatest influence of the O.S.L., besides its cross-breeding with the Alternative Rituals/Supplemental Worship Resources work through the dual involvement of Hickman, Saliers, and others, has been in the area of publishing.[55] Sacramental Life and Doxology (a scholarly journal) were preceded by Versicle and Work/Worship. As earlier citations in this very work attest,

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[53]Cited in Taylor, 163-164. Again, this dates from the late 1950's. The full text of rules 3 and 5 refer to the wearing of a pulpit gown in "morning worship and sacramental services," and observing the sacramental services "with due and proper frequency throughout the Church Year." Both statements show that this predates a systematic advocacy of weekly Eucharist.

[54]A typical table of contents from a recent issue of Sacramental Life, O.S.L.'s "in-house" periodical, includes the following: "Reflections on 'Magnifying the Sacraments'" (Dwight Vogel), "Getting Children Connected" (Charles Sigman), "A Trial Daily Lectionary" (Hoyt Hickman), "The Preaching Pilgrimage: Carry a Compass" (Barbara Bate), "On the Road" (Timothy Crouch), "A Liturgical Index to the United Methodist Hymnal" (Mark and Susan Babb), and book reviews. (Sacramental Life 8, no. 5 [Epiphany 1996]:1). The journal attempts to strike a balance between theoretical speculations, liturgical education, and practical suggestions.

[55]Complete information on O.S.L.'s publications can be obtained by contacting P.O. Box 22279, Akron, OH 44302-0079, (330)535-8656, or on the Web at www.Saint-Luke.org.

these publications are valuable resources for studying Methodist sacramental attitudes and efforts at liturgical renewal. O.S.L. was also the organization responsible for the reissuing of Rattenbury's Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley. In recent years, many original works by Methodist liturgists and musicians have had either their first or a revised publication with O.S.L.[56] The Order is also responsible for the publication of actual service materials such as the three-part series Lift Up Your Hearts, which provides texts for Eucharistic prayers for each Sunday throughout the entire Revised Common Lectionary.[57] Recently they have released the expanded resource And Also With You (1994).[58] A volume for each year of the lectionary provides not only a Eucharistic prayer for each Sunday but also a summary of the lectionary readings, greeting, collects, prayer for the day, psalm response based on a familiar hymn tune, suggested hymns, and bulletin art.

Thus, by the late 1980's, Methodism had, at least in the area of resource publication and the interest of denominational

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[56]For example, four recent publications include Carlton R. Young's My Great Redeemer's Praise: An Introduction to Christian Hymns (Akron, OH: O.S.L. Publications, 1995); Clifton F. Guthrie's (ed.) For All the Saints: A Calendar of Commemorations for United Methodists (1995), a newly revised edition of Don E. Saliers' Worship and Spirituality (1996), and Dwight Vogel's Food for Pilgrims: A Journey with Saint Luke (1997).

[57]Michael J. O'Donnell, Lift Up Your Hearts: Eucharistic Prayers Based on the Common Lectionary (Cleveland, OH: O.S.L. Publications, 1989).

[58]Timothy J. Crouch, et. al., And Also With You: Worship Resources Based on the Revised Common Lectionary (Akron, OH: O.S.L. Publications, 1994).

agencies in worship, undergone some kind of a revolution. The question remains whether that revolution was only on paper and in the minds of liturgical scholars, or whether the church as a whole had begun to rethink its identity, its theology, and its worship praxis. How effective were the reformers?

Successes of Liturgical Renewal

Studying the renewal movement in perspective, an interesting characteristic emerges. Most of their successes were theological, in the realm of restoring a focus on orthodox theology and responsible liturgics. Most of their failures were psychological, in the realm of understanding human nature and response to this restoration. The successes will be considered first.

Consciousness-Raising

One of the greatest successes of the reformers was the mere fact that they brought these issues to the forefront of discussion and, in the process, broadened the spectrum of what was appropriate in Methodist worship. Whereas White in 1979 lamented that there were few books and publications on worship to meet the growing demand,[59] today the market is, if anything, saturated. White's own Introduction to Christian Worship, Documents of Christian Worship, and Protestant Worship Today are

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[59]White, "A Liturgical Strategy," 245-246.

prime examples.[60] In the matter of vestments, the Rule of the O.S.L. in the late 1950's advocated timidly that "insofar as possible we will wear recognizable clerical garb when engaged in the business of the Church, and will wear at least a pulpit gown in morning worship and sacramental services."[61] Though in rural and some Southern churches this is still a matter of question, in general a great deal more pulpit gowns and recognizable clerical garb (including the occasional collar!) are worn by United Methodist ministers. As a study of the most recent Cokesbury catalog makes clear, clerical collars, albs, deacon's stoles, scapulars, and other liturgical vestments are actively sold by the denomination. So are all sorts of paraments, banners, processional crosses, candles, and even a thurible. Although denomination-wide large-scale reforms in the order of worship have yet to appear, it is not unusual to see small but significant changes creeping in where a particular pastor is open

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[60]Although this is not a Methodist publication per se, the recent publication of The Complete Library of Christian Worship, ed. Robert Webber (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993-1996), must be mentioned as evidence of the respect which the topic has gained among publishers and some students and pastors. This seven-volume set covers the Biblical foundations and historical development of Christian worship and provides resources for the Sunday service, music and the arts, the Christian Year, sacred actions, and ministries related to worship. It attempts to incorporate resources from "liturgical," free-church, and charismatic traditions. Its purpose and orientation "is pastoral, and grows out of the urgent desire to serve those who lead worship in the local church" (I:xxxvii). Methodist (and other Wesleyan) scholars and professors including White, Hickman, Saliers, Thomas Troeger, William Willimon, and Donald Boyd have contributed.

[61]Taylor, 165-166.

enough to consider them. One obvious example is the more widespread use of multiple Scripture readings.[62]

Publication of Resources

The Alternate Rituals/Supplemental Worship Resources project ended up being responsible for nothing less than an explosion of available resources for those who cared to use them in Methodist worship. Of course, the UMH and UMBOW were the most widely publicized and encouraged. The UMH aims, in fact, to be a complete basic book of worship for the congregation:

> The Hymnal provides what the congregation needs for Sunday and other times of worship (including the sacraments): the rites of marriage and burial, and morning and evening prayer and praise. Additional worship materials are topically placed among the hymns; other prayers, litanies, and creeds follow the occasional services.[63]

It is arranged according to a Trinitarian theological pattern which incorporates the entire Christian Year under its section on Jesus Christ and the Wesleyan ordo salutis in its section on the Holy Spirit, then considers the community of faith in which the Trinity is experienced, and finally the new heaven and new earth in which both Trinity and community will be experienced perfectly. A careful study of its contents yields not only a

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[62]For example, the author's home church, a very cautious congregation in Central Illinois, recently introduced into the service an additional Scripture reading (though unfortunately not usually from the Old Testament), the custom of standing for the Gospel, and the responses after the Scripture "This is the word of God; Thanks be to God." (Incidentally, in Methodist circles, as befits the emphasis on personal experience, the first part of that response has usually evolved into "This is the word of God for the people of God.")

[63]UMH, v.

basic theological education but also an understanding of a particularly Wesleyan heritage.[64] The UMBOW, intended mainly for pastors, contains fuller resources on the Christian Year (with both historical background and practical liturgical suggestions), special United Methodist Sundays such as Golden Cross and Native American Awareness, prayers and blessings (all of which require being prayed with the eyes open, unless one has a photographic memory!), an entire section of healing services, and a number of occasional services including the love feast.[65] In addition, several previous Supplemental Worship Resources publications were collected into the New Handbook of the Christian Year, edited by Hickman, Saliers, Stookey, and White to accompany the UMH and UMBOW, thereby providing greater depth and background material.[66]

Recovery of Contact with the Early Church and with Ecumenical Christianity

These two items were the first two stated goals of the reformers, and they belong together. Peiffer writes:

> The rediscovery of the ancient liturgical orders, a phenomenon which by 1970 was basic to the work of liturgical revision in most denominations, fostered ecumenical agreement regarding the essential elements of the Lord's Supper.[67]

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[64]Ibid., viii-x.

[65]UMBOW, 4-11.

[66]Hoyt Hickman et al., New Handbook of the Christian Year, revised ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992). For a complete list (through 1987) of the resources which were published as part of the SWR series, see Hoyt Hickman, "Looking Ahead in United Methodist Worship," Doxology 2 (1985): 35-38.

[67]Peiffer, 253.

This was true of other services as well.

The recovery of the early church was deliberate and thoroughgoing, aided especially by the work of White, who, like Wesley before him, was a patristics scholar. He comments, "We all borrowed from Justin and Hippolytus. Actually I looked at them as something that we didn't dare not use."[68] The reformers were drawn to the early church orders of worship, Peiffer notes, because of their simplicity, before centuries of "incrustations," and the "similarities which they perceived to exist between their world and the one which Justin and Hippolytus had inhabited": an increasingly non-linear culture and increasing persecution of Christian believers were among them.[69]

The desire to be enriched by the resources of (and to gain the approval of) other denominations in an increasingly ecumenical world was also strong. White was again in the forefront of this movement, but others such as Hickman and Saliers who had experienced the richness of worship in other traditions were eager to draw upon those experiences. As Peiffer notes, "increasingly the United Methodists affiliated professionally with the liturgical scholars of other denominations" in C.O.C.U., the Consultation on Common Texts, etc.[70] White commented perceptively,

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[68]Interview with White, 15 April 1989, cited in Peiffer, 249.

[69]Peiffer, 249-250.

[70]Ibid., 257-258.

> I was very sensitive to Anglicans who thought Methodists were liturgical clods. It was very important to me that we be in the ecumenical ball game. The peers to whom I looked were not really in the Methodist church.[71]

In such comments, the seeds of where the renewal failed begin to be seen, and it is that which must now be considered.[72]

Failures of Liturgical Renewal

"In retrospect," commented White in 1994, "we seem to have done some things backwards: we revised our rites in the 1970s and 1980s and we are now trying to understand them."[73] Among the things the reformers failed to understand was the extent to which their sacramental, liturgical, and ecumenical emphasis might either go overboard or be misunderstood when it lost sight of Wesley's original goal.

Eucharist over Word

Certainly it was not the expressed aim of the reformers to devalue preaching and the Service of the Word in Methodism. However, this was not always how the reforms played out in practice. Though the recovery of the reading of Scripture in

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[71]Interview with White, 1 February 1989. Cited in Peiffer, 259.

[72]Hickman, reflecting on the benefits of his "outsider status" at some of the revision meetings, expressed an evaluation of at least some of the committee's slant: "I was new to the field of worship. I had moved in from the pastorate and didn't get the same kind of brainwashing that people who now get Ph.D.s at Notre Dame get." (Interview with Hickman, 19 December 1991, cited in Peiffer, 260.)

[73]James F. White, "A Conversation With Bishop Sano," Circuit Rider, July-August 1994, 11.

public worship has been strongly advocated, the recovery of Biblical preaching has not always been so firmly commended by Methodist liturgical scholars. Writing in Sacramental Life, historian Grant Sperry-White commented,

> Perceptions play an enormous role in the work of liturgical renewal in the local church. I fear that many in the United Methodist Church currently perceive the goal of the revised Sunday service as the exaltation of the eucharist at the expense of the preached word. Doubtless, there are some involved in the work of renewal whose own practices feed that fear.[74]

Though Sperry-White goes on to extol a more balanced approach, his perceptions seem accurate. At the beginning of the renewal movement, Paul Sanders had cautioned the keeping of a Wesleyan balance:

> Wesley would have understood better than most the self-defeating nature of a 'liturgical revival' conceived and prosecuted apart from preaching. The later Tractarian Revival, though grounded in theology, too often tended to dissipate itself in debate over rubrics. Modern Protestants who undertake to 'enrich' (as they say) their services without a sound theology are, I should judge, building most precariously.[75]

While White and his fellow reformers certainly had a sound theology, Sanders' caution is still valuable. Remembering Wesley's over-arching theme of holiness, Sanders adds:

> The assumption that Wesley must have been concerned either to preach or else to revive Eucharistic worship is unwarranted. Clearly the Revival aimed, with the whole Gospel, at the total conversion of whole men to a whole faith and a whole participation in the whole Christian community, seeking wholeness of life. Wesley would hardly

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[74]Grant Sperry-White, "Two Tables: An Approach to Renewing the Sunday Service," Sacramental Life 9, no. 3 (Ordinary Time 1996): 19.

[75]Sanders, "Wesley's Eucharistic Faith," 158.

> have understood the opposition between Word and Sacrament which some of us dearly cherish.[76]

Perhaps a bit of residual anger among the reformers at remembered excesses from their childhood--the "de-contexted" Scripture readings and "pretextial" sermons which Quillian satirized so eloquently, and the emphasis on moment and not process in conversion--played into their discomfort with anything sermonic, proclamatory, and evangelical. A note of this can be detected in Queen's voice when he writes,

> The extreme emphasis on preaching in the nineteenth century at the expense of worship compromised the church's sacramental life. It is curious that this era assumed that faith in Christ as the sole condition of salvation was better mediated through a man's voice than through the consecrated elements of the Holy Communion. This illusion still lingers in Methodism![77]

Of course the proclamation of the Word does not mediate faith any better than the reception of the Eucharist, but neither should it be devalued as a lesser channel. The preaching event is, after all, an <u>event</u>, a worship experience and a means of grace, too. Hickman, evaluating his own efforts, commented,

> Much as my heart is in the Eucharist, I recognize that the state of readiness for a recovery of the Service of the Word has been much greater. That's the thing that has constantly been most central in our tradition.[78]

<u>Ecumenicity over Anglican-Methodist Heritage</u>

The publications of the Alternate Rituals project, as

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[76]Ibid.

[77]Queen, 9.

[78]Interview with Hickman, 18 December 1991, cited in Peiffer, 264.

Peiffer notes, beginning with Lord's Supper in 1972, "represented the abandonment of much that since 1549 had been central to the Anglican-Methodist eucharistic heritage."[79] Not all of the reformers' actions, of course, were negative. The restoration of Scripture reading and psalmody, the attempt to strike a balance between Word and Sacrament and to express this as normative for the Sunday service, the re-uniting of the Eucharistic prayer and recognition of its fourfold structure, the emphasis on forgiveness and joyful celebration as of importance in the Eucharist,[80] the perpetual attempts at encouraging more congregational participation were all valuable contributions.[81] And certainly, the desire to look to the early church was a Wesleyan one as well even if the results were not always particularly either Anglican or evangelical. However, with the powerful exception of the UMH,[82] strictly Methodist resources for achieving these Methodist goals were in short supply in the

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[79]Peiffer, 261.

[80] See on this point Michael J. O'Donnell, "Finding Forgiveness," Sacramental Life 4, no. 1 (February/March 1991): 2-4.

[81]Ibid., 263. Scripture, psalmody, and weekly Eucharist were certainly valued in Anglicanism, anyway. Peiffer mentions also that "throughout the preparation of Lord's Supper...Stookey championed a Wesleyan understanding of eucharistic presence, one which comprehended Christ's presence in the Supper without trying to explain it" (263). Though neither Peiffer nor Stookey say so, this idea, like so many of Wesley's ideas, is a thoroughly Anglican concept.

[82]This is mainly due to the hymns, though, not the service resources it contains. In his selection of hymnody and organization of topics, editor Carlton Young gave a large place to the hymnody and theology of the Wesleys and early Methodism.

reformers' publications. For example, there is no section of services specifically from the Methodist heritage in the UMBOW; the watch night is not included at all, and the covenant service and love feast are found (with difficulty, one might add) in two different sections. Furthermore, materials from the EUB tradition were not even closely considered in the process.[83] White evaluated his earlier work somewhat critically when he said,

> The sense of tradition that I have developed [since 1972] is basically knowing who you are. That makes the revision very problematic....Looking back, we could have taken the 1965 rite, put the canon [eucharistic prayer] back together and made few additional changes.[84]

More than abandoning or criticizing of specifically Anglican and Wesleyan liturgical resources, though, the reformers seemed to have missed the mark on the over-arching purpose of Wesley's sacramental heritage and revival: the life of holiness and the use of the means of grace. There was a great deal of debate over rubrics, and a desire to change the minds of the worshipping community about their worship practices and theological opinions.[85] Much less attention was paid to the way in which these reforms would be of assistance in changing the worshippers' hearts. And, perhaps as a result, the concern over how the

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[83]Peiffer, 262.

[84]Interview with White, 15 March 1989, cited in Peiffer, 264.

[85]This seems true, ironically, despite the fact that authors such as White were busy making the point that worship was not merely an intellectual experience.

reforms would be accepted psychologically and emotionally was not foremost.[86]

Liturgics Over Psychology

Personal experience is not the ultimate arbiter of either theological truth or liturgical "correctness;" however, it needs to be taken into account. Peiffer outlines how much of the revision committee's work was "hijacked" by the agenda of liturgical scholars despite its stated goals of focusing on the needs of the local church. As an example, he cites Louis Shown, a lay member of the committee: "The laypersons on the committee did not make any contributions. They didn't have the background. The scholars were talking beyond us."[87] The reformers' clear motivation was that "to reform worship also was to reform belief."[88] They thought they knew both why and how. One of the most obvious evidences of this was their continual refusal to incorporate the Prayer of Humble Access, a beloved and psychologically sound relic from the Anglican heritage, into the Eucharistic service, "despite repeated pleas from numerous persons (including a district superintendent and a professor of

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[86]For an interesting example of how this played itself out in one local congregation, see Edwin F. Hann, "Worship as Response: Congregational Action as an Integral Part of Meaningful Christian Worship" (D.Min. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1982.)

[87]Interview with Shown, 23 December 1991, cited in Peiffer, 267.

[88]Peiffer, 312.

pastoral theology)."[89] A patronizing attitude towards the wants and needs of parishioners, and a lack of understanding of how deeply the three-part revivalistic "song service" from their past (singing, prayer, and preaching) was entrenched in the denominational psyche, seemed sometimes evident. White admitted as much when he commented on the continuing antipathy of scholars towards revivalism:

> Theologically weak as it was, revivalism had some elements of keen psychological insight that we have had to relearn in the last ten years. For one thing, revivalism knew that in order to move people spiritually you have to move them physically. The church music which we told people for years was not good for them (and they still requested) was based on the realization that music is a body art. Even more important was the element of spontaneity, the unexpected possibility in worship....Is it any wonder that older people in our churches have a curious nostalgia for the worship of this period, no matter how hard seminary-trained clergy discourage such hankering after the fleshpots of Egypt?[90]

The whole question of "contemporary" worship hinges on this point. The "praise and worship" tradition stands in direct succession to the gospel hymns, Sunday night services, revival meetings, and midweek prayer-meetings of previous generations. In the minds of most reformers this tradition was theologically weak although psychologically satisfying (and probably, for some,

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[89]Ibid., 268. O'Donnell comments, as the reformers did, that its placement in the historic service after the eucharistic prayer made the Eucharist too penitential; but there is no reason, contrary to his insistence, that it could not be incorporated into the time of Confession (O'Donnell, "Finding Forgiveness," 4). Perhaps a little more seriousness about needing to confess sin was needed here; a positive theological point about the Prayer of Humble Access is that it recognizes that God is God and humans are not.

[90]White, Christian Worship in Transition, 79-80.

assumed to be theologically weak <u>because</u> it was psychologically satisfying). The degree of psychological satisfaction present implies that current Methodist worship has some things to learn from this tradition, and needs to reflect on its theological place and purpose more fully.

Where in the end did the reformers fail? Their diagnosis was generally accurate, but their prescription did not always incorporate the right dosage at the right time. Peiffer comments in conclusion,

> It is possible to recover ancient texts, to employ ecumenical patterns, and to incorporate the unique theological insights of one's own tradition yet fail to foster worship which transforms the corporate life of a denomination.[91]

In the end, attention to some of the dynamics developed in the previous chapter might have been of assistance in the reformers' work: the role of freedom and community as arbiters of correctness and security in American worship; the reasons (both good and bad) why the revivalistic tradition rejected "formality;" the historic character of Methodism as "ordered action" instead of "ordered worship;" the need for an honored, though not central, place for human experience and comfort; and above all the question of holiness--both the Christian need to pursue it and the human tendency to avoid it. As Quillian so eloquently reminds the reader, some of the greatest problems with worship involve "an expression of embarrassment at the thought of

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[91]Peiffer, 317.

God really and objectively present among us."[92] H. Grady Hardin, the original chairperson of the Alternate Rituals Committee, admitted ruefully,

> Some of us who are involved with the worship life of the United Methodist Church often start our work with an emphasis on the forms and orders. It is better to begin with a lively faith which seeks the forms and orders to express that faith."[93]

Perhaps a little Christian humility would have helped, too.

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[92]Quillian, 18.

[93]H. Grady Hardin, The Leadership of Worship (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 105, cited in Peiffer, 318.

CHAPTER 5

THE IDEAL OF METHODIST WORSHIP

Introduction

To develop fully a program for the renewal of Methodist worship, taking into account its heritage, progress, and previous renovations, would take another book. But the barest outline of such a program can be sketched here, and needs to be. As Quillian reminds his fellow critics gently, "The cheapest of all writing as well as the cheapest of all preaching is the sort that finds all the faults and, having arraigned, has no confessing or redeeming word."[1]

It is the opinion of this author that future hopeful reformers of Methodism would do well to keep in mind a simple and seemingly obvious formula which is both profound and deeply Wesleyan: eucharistic enthusiasm plus evangelical experience equals holiness of heart and life. The best of our tradition is both eucharistic and evangelical, both vertical and horizontal, both mystical and verbal, both objective and experiential. What awaits us is a better synthesis.

Eucharistic Enthusiasm

Wesley's deep devotion to the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and his understanding of the means of grace are,

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[1]Quillian, 18.

it should be apparent by now, a model for modern Methodists. So is the devotion and understanding of the early church and Anglican sources on which he drew. The liturgical reformers of the past thirty years, as well as earlier figures such as T.O. Summers, understood at least this much of the Wesleyan heritage. Theologically they cannot be faulted for their understanding that eucharist means "joy;" that worship at its most profound is paschal, aware of the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection and meeting him in Easter faith; and that to be on the Christian journey means to be open to receiving, through both Word and Sacrament, God's objective and unexplainable grace. Rattenbury, considering Wesley, wrote these penetrating words:

> Wesley's sense of corporate religion and the value of Sacramental rites as outward and visible means of grace have had a great influence in restoring the balance between the excesses of Institutional and Individualistic religion...
>
> Worship regarded as corporate and mediate may in some sense be a Catholic rather than a Protestant principle, but its increasing acceptance by men aware of the findings of modern social psychology cannot be denied.[2]

In a world which, adrift from the moorings of a cultural pseudo-Christianity, seeks something substantive, deep, and dependable in which to ground its faith and trust, true eucharistic worship, joyful, paschal, and renewing, may be the best thing Methodists have to offer earnest seekers. Perhaps, like Susanna Wesley, it will be converting grace those seekers find at the Table.

Particularly important in Methodism's sacramental heritage, besides the emphasis on Christ's real presence, is the sense of

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[2]J. Ernest Rattenbury, "Worship and Sacraments," Expository Times 49 (October 1937-September 1938): 392.

koinonia and eschatological focus which characterized Methodist sacramental worship at its best. The Holy Communion is a communion, not only with God, but with each other; and it is together that we look towards our future hope. As John Wesley's section titles in Hymns on the Lord's Supper had it, we take the Sacrament not only "as it is a Sign and a Means of Grace" but also as "a Pledge of Heaven,"[3] the eternal community. The old-time communion "seasons" were often remembered, not only for the nearness of Christ's presence, but for the fellowship of believers together. The contemporary world hungers for authentic relationship and hope. It is in relationships of sacrificial love, which mirror the eternal self-giving of the Trinity, that followers of Christ are brought most fully and deeply through the process of sanctification to their final destiny. This kind of love seems all but gone in today's society. Here, in Methodism's heritage and in that heritage's Biblical and early church roots, are resources to address that hunger and to model that kind of love. In a world of illusions, the church must point to the real thing. As Rob Staples commented, "That is why a vital sacramental theology is important. Sacraments underscore the objectivity of our faith--what God has done for us prior to and apart from our own doings."[4] Robert Paul has said,

> The Church's faith is operative in the Sacraments, and they

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[3]Rattenbury, The Eucharistic Hymns, H-10, H-30.

[4]Rob L. Staples, Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1991), 38.

> become ineffective ceremonies or simple magic if we deny it, but the great fact with which we have to reckon in the water of Baptism or around the Lord's table is not our faith but his faithfulness.[5]

None of this can be accomplished, either, without a deeper understanding of the relationship of Baptism and the Eucharist. At the very least, we can draw from Wesley an understanding of Baptism as the entry to the life of faith and to a community where the means of grace are available to nurture believers in that faith. We can also understand it as the act that inaugurates in each person his or her ministry in the world; for ministry is not the prerogative only of the ordained. And, consistency seems to demand that if something objective is happening in the Eucharist, something objective is happening in Baptism as well. Though we may be uncomfortable with the term "baptismal regeneration," and though we may rightly refuse to define the precise relationship of the water to the grace bestowed, still Christ's real presence meets us in that action just as he meets us in the Eucharist. We need to take Baptism more seriously, practice it less indiscriminately, encourage its renewal rather than its re-administration, and understand how it fits into a life-long process of and responsibility for education and nurture.[6] And we need to recognize that each time we come to

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[5]Robert S. Paul, The Atonement and the Sacraments (New York: Abingdon, 1960), 313.

[6]Paul Brown, "No Indiscriminate Baptisms, Please," Circuit Rider, July-August 1994), 13. This entire issue of CR focuses on the Baptism study that was later adopted in a revised form by the 1996 General Conference.

the Table, every use we make of the means of grace, every step we take in the order of salvation, represents a renewal and a living out of our baptismal covenant. "It is well said," comments James White, "that the Eucharist is the only part of Baptism that is repeated."[7]

Evangelical Experience

Perhaps in the process of this particular history, the evangelical side of Wesley and his followers has sometimes seemed a poor stepchild to the sacramental. But it should be apparent by now that this is far from the truth. Wesley's synthesis of the two has been noted and praised; and, in the lessons from Methodism's liturgical renewal, the danger has been seen of addressing our imbalance towards experience by becoming equally imbalanced in the other direction. Sometimes, a distrust of the personal, of the emotional and expressive, of decision and experience and community and freedom, has invaded a little too much the minds and hearts of those who would return us to the Wesleyan synthesis. Ultimately, liturgical rubrics and theological propositions are unequal to the task of either prescribing or describing what happens when God is experienced objectively in a human soul. Harmon, in his offhanded way, recognized this when he said,

> We had upon one of our ritual commissions an estimable member who insisted that prayer should always have in it

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[7]James White, "Refining the Gold," Circuit Rider, July-August 1994, 11.

> certain elements which he proceeded to name, such as adoration, confession, petition, and so forth. Very good. But prayer is fundamentally a man speaking unto his God and in that awful experience all objective analyses, especially if done by others, fall short of the thing itself.[8]

In the last analysis, if either correctness in rubrics or authenticity of Divine communion must be sacrificed, it needs to be the rubrics which go. Sarah Flynn, a lay member of O.S.L., wrote this penetrating comment:

> Would I want 'prayerbook conformity' if it left some of us out? Would I want it only if I wrote it? Would I want it if what it meant was having the Pillar, but without the Fire?...
>
> What this does is push me to look for God, not in theological congruity, grammatical balance, and poetic elegance as I am used to doing, but in the process, messy and confusing, surprising and irritatingly unpredictable...
>
> Can we accept the price and pain of liturgical diversity and 'incorrectness' as a sign that we are a diverse community, a diversity which is more precious to God than all the most beautiful liturgies in the world?...a sign of God's ingathering of humanity, a sign of reconciliation across old battle lines and a prophetic witness to the One who makes all things new.[9]

Here is where we need at least to listen to the voices that speak out of the tradition of revival, prayer meeting, and praise and worship, including its charismatic manifestations. Much can be criticized theologically and culturally about this strand of religion; certainly it suffers from a tendency to prefer explanation to mystery, arrival to journey, and happiness to joy. Still, it sounds an echo of the human desire for worship that involves the whole being, touches the heart, and seeks a measure

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[8]Harmon, 237.

[9]Sarah Flynn, "How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land?" Sacramental Life 10, no. 2 (Pentecost 1997): 11-12.

of security in an insecure world. That emphasis needs to be noted.

This does not, however, mean that authentic experience and personal meeting with God necessarily have to be emotional. The corporate nature of Wesleyan piety is a helpful corrective here. The danger of experience, as Staples also reminds us, "is the danger of subjectivity, which is not altogether unlike being 'curved in upon oneself,' which was Luther's understanding of sin."[10] Too often in Methodist history, theologians and worshippers alike have sought assurance and taken their spiritual temperature by analyzing their feelings. Faith goes deeper than feeling, though it sometimes affects it. Ultimately, what Methodism must remember from the evangelical and personal side of its heritage is not the quest for happiness and emotional satisfaction but the quest for a real personal surrender of will to the Divine Will and commitment of self to the Divine Way. Here too Methodism has something to say to a contemporary situation which values neither commitment nor surrender.

"Holiness of Heart and Life"

What this world hungers for most of all, and what not only Wesley but ultimately Scripture states as the most important goal of life, is wholeness, or in Wesleyan terms, holiness. This quest for holiness was the framework into which Wesley fit both his emphasis on evangelical experience and his eucharistic

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[10]Staples, 38.

fervor. The Church, the Body of Christ, was the avenue for growth in holiness. This occurred through the corporate worship of the whole congregation which glorified God, and through the small group meetings within the Body which pressed the believer towards sanctification. White comments,

> A truly evangelical congregation is not one fed on fad foods but on Scripture, Sacraments, and prayer. Because such a congregation has something healthy and solid to offer, the world is attracted to where the hungry are really fed, not just tantalized. Growth in grace, based on the means of grace, leads to growth in mission and service to the unchurched.[11]

Word, Sacrament, prayer, and spiritual disciplines, were for Wesley all means of grace; not of earning it, but of opening oneself to it. Sometimes it seems to this author that the search for wholeness can be defined simply as the removing of the blocks in soul, mind, and body which impede God's granting it. As Hann discussed how the group he worked with in his dissertation study began to evaluate true and profound worship in terms of a "flow" unimpeded by blocks of idiosyncracy, argument, or sin, he observed:

> When RF [a participant in the study] could count 24 separate pieces of planned liturgy and still say "the flow...was beautiful," he was talking about something beyond the liturgy, beyond the worshippers. He was talking about a "flow" that is really the movement of the Holy Spirit.[12]

Later he cites another participant:

> Worship itself has to be such that it flows and gets you

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[11]White, "Church Growth Through Worship: Do We Serve Junk Food or Nutrition?" Circuit Rider, December 1987-January 1988, 7.

[12]Hann, 73.

> captured and starts to pull you into something. (If it does,) when it concludes...and you have that captured in your arms and you're prepared for it, there's a different me.[13]

Hann comments, "This is the Spirit's free-flowing 'new birth.' This is Christian worship."[14]

This idea is psychologically sound, and Wesley understood it well. But wholeness or holiness is also a difficult and disciplined road that requires dying and rising again; and as worship is the most crucial arena for this to occur, it is also the easiest arena to avoid facing the real issues at hand. The most important crisis in worship is, in the final analysis, that people are trying to avoid God. White remarked during the revision process that the new Methodist services reflected and imaged "the Christian life as dependent upon God rather than human activism."[15] That seems to be exactly what scares people. It even scared the reformers.

The task ahead, then, is not merely one of developing more and better liturgies, providing more opportunities for worship in both small group and gathered congregation, rediscovering the various treasures of our heritage, and bringing the theology prayed in Methodism's liturgies up to speed with the theology it proclaims. All of these are important and vital pieces of the renewal, not only of Methodist worship, but of a Methodist church

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[13]Ibid., 84.

[14]Ibid.

[15]White, "Does Our Liturgy Reflect Our Faith?", 5.

which teeters periodically on the brink of self-destruction. A higher task, though, is remembering that one of the most important things that the church itself exists for is to seek to become like God; to get out of His way and let Him sanctify us.

In his textbook Introduction to Christian Worship, White cites a now-legendary description of worship in Roman Catholic circles. Deriving from a 1903 encyclical by Pope Pius X, it declares worship to be for "the glorification of God and the sanctification of humanity." Through glorifying God in the community of the faithful, humans come at last to the wholeness they were created for, to holiness:

> Iranaeus tells us the glory of God is a human fully alive. Nothing glorifies God more than a human being made holy; nothing is more likely to make a person holy than the desire to glorify God.[16]

Charles Wesley said it best (UMH #627):

"Sure and real is the grace,
The manner be unknown.
Only meet us in Thy ways
and perfect us in one.
Let us taste the heavenly powers,
Lord, we ask for nothing more.
Thine to bless, 'tis only ours
To wonder and adore."

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[16]White, Introduction to Christian Worship, 29-30.

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